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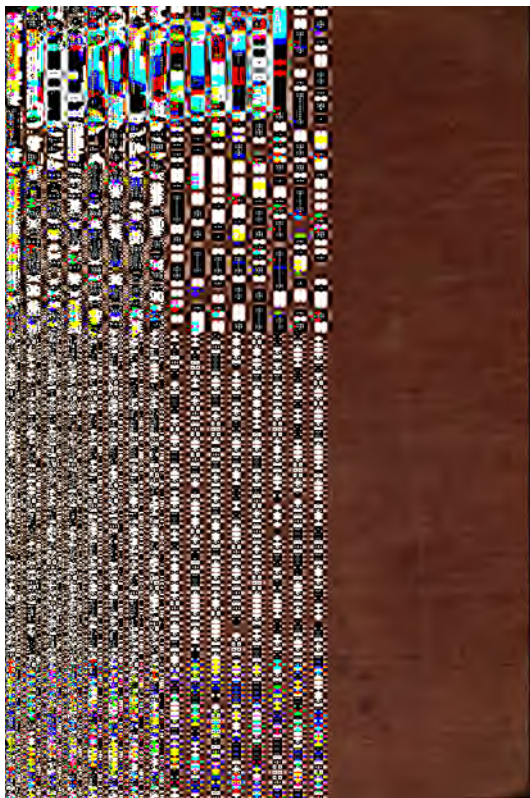
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THE
SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

BY
NATHANIEL VINCENT, A. M.
Minister of the Gospel.

With an Introductory Essay,

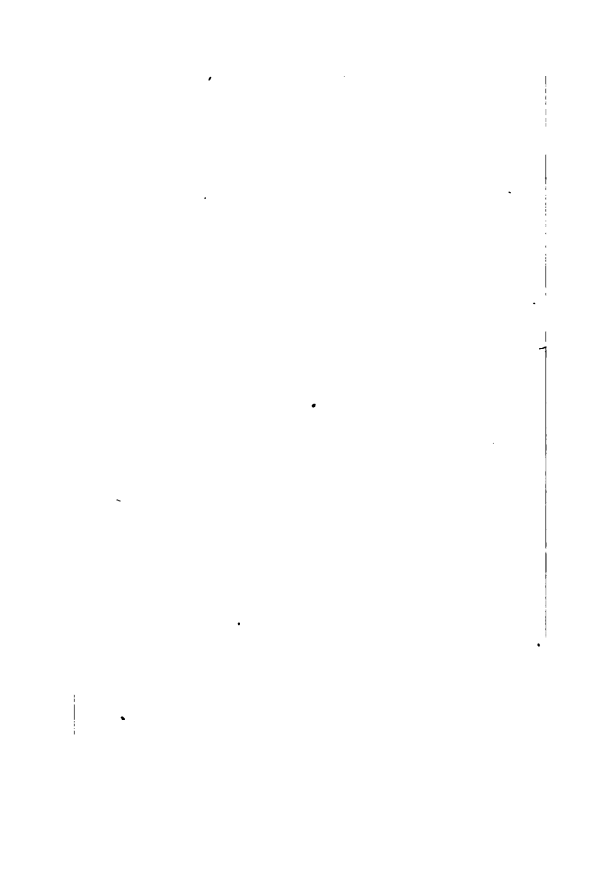
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ENOCH POND, A. M.

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ESSAY

ON PRAYER.

One of the greatest privileges which the God of grace has bestowed upon his people is that of prayer. And one of the strangest facts in all their strange history is their backwardness to avail themselves of this precious privilege. So truly *pleasant* is the faithful performance of this duty ; so *honorable* is it for dust and ashes like ourselves to be admitted into the presence of the Holy One, to hold unrestrained communion with him ; and so *important* withal, to be able in this way to have power with God and prevail ; that it might be supposed—if the door of the celestial palace was but opened—if the privilege of coming to a mercy-seat was granted—if *permission* to pray was only given ;—that the mercy seat would be crowded with suppliants, and the voice of prayer would never cease. But the truth is, that when we are not only permitted, but commanded to pray ; and not only commanded, but

urged—by motives, promises, and all possible encouragements, to persevere and be faithful in this duty;—notwithstanding all this, prayer is *greatly, fearfully neglected*. The mercy seat, instead of being thronged, is comparatively deserted; and the voice of humble, prevalent prayer, instead of falling in unceasing and delightful accents on the ear of Heaven, there is reason to fear, is but seldom heard.

There is, indeed, no special dearth of the formalities of devotion. There are among Christians—I hope among all Christians—the set times of prayer, in the closet, the family, the social circle, and in the great congregation. But we cannot be ignorant, that the formalities of devotion are not devotion; nor do set seasons of prayer always bring with them the true spirit of supplication. We know not but Paul, previous to conversion, prayed as long and as often as any of the Pharisees; and yet language is used respecting him, subsequent to that event, which implies that he never had prayed before. ‘Inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold—he prayeth!’ A strange thing, truly; Saul of Tarsus—*prayeth!*

What is prayer? What is implied in prayer? In what temper and manner must prayer be offered, in order that it may be acceptable and prevail?—These, it will be seen, are radical questions, meeting us on the very threshold of the subject, and requiring to be well considered before we farther proceed.

1. Those who come to God in acceptable prayer must believe that *he is*—and that he is such as he is described to be in the Bible. They must believe that he is a God *nigh at hand*—that, with all his adorable perfections and attributes, he is literally present—in the place of supplication—beholding, hearing and knowing all that passes there. Much prayer, it may be feared, fails of its object, from want of strong and lively apprehensions of a *present* God. The Divine Being is too often regarded as a distant spirit, seated far away on his heavenly throne, almost beyond the ken of faith or the reach of prayer; and under these impressions, prayer necessarily becomes a doubtful service, and quickly degenerates into formality. I would not, indeed, have the suppliant impute a corporeal shape and organs to the Hearer of prayer, that he might conceive of him with

the more impression,—though even this were, perhaps, a less evil, than to philosophize and spiritualize Him so far away, as to leave no vivid conceptions of his presence. But I would have all praying persons feel, when they bow before the mercy seat, that that great and glorious personage whom we call God, is *really present*—before their face—as really as the objects of sense around them—and nearer than any of these objects can be. An impression of this sort, deeply felt when prayer is begun, and retained and cherished while the service is continued, would go far towards excluding the wandering thought, and the dull desire, and would essentially promote that nearness and familiarity of communion, together with that reverence and godly fear, without which prayer cannot be acceptable and prevail.

2. Acceptable prayer implies a *full confidence* in all those promises which God has given for our encouragement in this duty, and a *strong expectation* that, so far as we can on the whole desire it, our prayers will be answered. From a want of this accompanying faith, much prayer, doubtless, is rendered ineffectual. Christians pray, because they think it is

their duty to pray, or perhaps because they love to pray; but with scarcely an expectation that their prayers are to have influence, or are to be followed by any corresponding results. Now it scarcely need be said that, in such a spirit, effectual, fervent prayer never was offered, and never can be. It is not in the nature of the human mind to engage earnestly and perseveringly in any service, without the expectation of accomplishing something. And besides, such faithless supplications can hardly be said to be offered to the God of the Bible, who has everywhere revealed himself as One who *heareth prayer*. Nor do they correspond to those examples of prayer which are recorded in the scriptures for our instruction. 'As for me,' says the Psalmist, 'I will call upon God, and *the Lord shall save me*. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud, and *he shall hear my voice*.' It was 'the prayer of faith which saved the sick,' and accomplished such wonders in ancient times; and a strong faith in the promises of God and in the various encouragements given in his word, is still equally essential in order to the success of prayer.

3. Acceptable prayer must be offered with *proper motives*. This may seem too obvious to require mention; and yet, is it not likely that good men sometimes impose upon themselves, and defeat the object of their prayers, by the minglings of selfishness? 'Do they never seek to acquit themselves well, in the *public* performance of this duty, with a view to the applause of men? Do they never implore a blessing on their efforts, that *they* may have the credit of success? or pray for Christian institutions, that, with these, their own plans may be promoted? or desire the progress of the gospel, that their sect or party may be advanced? May not the public teacher long for success to attend his instructions, that his ministry may receive honor? And may not his people join in the desire, that they may enjoy the comforts of respectability, and the advantage of numbers? It is humbling to think to what a degree we are actuated by *such principles* in our prayers, instead of the purer desire of seeing sinners saved from destruction, the crown of the Redeemer flourishing, and the will of God done on earth as it is in heaven. But so far as the motives of our prayers are sinful, it is impossible

that we can obtain our requests; for 'if we regard iniquity in our hearts, *the Lord will not hear us.*' He may see it to be for our real advantage that our wishes should not be gratified, till we have learned to set our hearts on worthier objects, and to have our eye more single in his cause.'

4. Acceptable prayer must be offered *in the name of Christ*. The suppliant must feel, that he is an unworthy, sinful creature, having no merit of his own, and not deserving to be regarded or answered, and he must come and ask for favors, entirely on the ground of *mercy*, as flowing through a Redeemer. Believing that there is no other way in which mercy can flow, and in which sinners can have access to God, he will approach the throne and urge his request *in the name of Christ*.

It is easier to *speak* of the merits of Christ in our devotions, than it is to bring the deceitful heart implicitly and uniformly to rest upon them. 'Do we not often plead his name in our *form of words*, while no corresponding reliance on that precious name accompanies what we utter? Do we never carry our own lurking self-righteousness even into God's

presence, and derive confidence in prayer from something pertaining to ourselves? Do we never admit the hope that God will hear us, on account of our having *prayed well*, with liveliness of affection, and enlargement of desire? Is there no such thing as coming to God with a boldness, growing out of the frequency of our approaches, the intimacy of communion we have maintained, or our attention to duties and consistency in obedience,—rather than from an exclusive and self-renouncing dependence on Christ's finished work, as all our salvation and all our desire? Let us only remember, that it is the purpose of God, in the whole plan of salvation, to exalt his mercy and humble the sinner, and we shall cease to wonder that petitions, in which we have done homage to ourselves and not to Christ, have been unanswered.'

5. That prayer may be acceptable, it is necessary that it should express our *real feelings*, and that our thoughts and affections should be *interested and engaged in it*.—Some of the principal evils incident to prayer are wandering thoughts, formality, and hypocrisy. We pray, because the forms of religion require it, or because others pray. We

visit the closet, and bend before the family altar, and rise in the social circle or in the house of God, because it is decent and customary so to do, and our Christian characters would be suspected, and our hopes of heaven forfeited, should we suffer ourselves to neglect these duties. Still, our feelings are not interested, our thoughts wander, we satisfy ourselves with mere words and appearances, and the service degenerates into a heartless form.

It may help to guard against these great and common evils, to avoid *generalities* and *common place expressions* in our prayers, and render them, so far as possible, *particular* and *appropriate*. There are some general subjects of prayer—of thanksgiving, confession and supplication—which may be introduced on all occasions; and there are certain phrases and modes of speech, in which these generalities are expressed, with which every child, who has been religiously educated, is familiar. Now I do not say that expressions such as these should be utterly excluded; because occasions may occur in which they will be appropriate, and will exactly express the feelings of the worshipper. But so great

is the danger, both to him who leads in prayer, and to those who unite in it, of using them formally, I had almost said mechanically, that they should be admitted as seldom as possible.

One of the causes of the so frequent use of general, formal expressions in prayer, is *mental indolence*. Persons may move round in the beaten track of their devotions, praying for the same things in almost the same words, day after day, with *little effort*; while to pursue a different course, to adapt their prayers to circumstances, and introduce new topics as they occur in new forms of speech, would require attention and thought.

A more excusable cause of the evil in question, and one which has considerable influence, arises from a *distrust* in the worshipper of *his own powers*, and from an *inordinate fear of man*. He is really afraid to throw aside his form, suffer his thoughts to expand, and pray for such things as times and circumstances suggest, lest he should be at a loss for words, be unable to proceed, and so disgrace himself and religion too.

Another cause of perhaps greater influence is this; persons feel under a sort of obligation, whenever they present

themselves before God, to introduce *most of the great general subjects of prayer*; and in order to do this, their prayers must of necessity be general and formal. But such persons are laboring under a very erroneous impression. We are under no obligations to introduce everything which might properly be a subject of prayer into all our addresses to the throne of grace. Indeed such a course would not be practicable, and if practicable, it would be altogether inexpedient. Abraham did not attempt this, when he prayed for Sodom; nor Jacob, when he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; nor Daniel, when he prayed so fervently for the reformation and return of his exiled people.

As has been already intimated, prayer, to be interesting, must be *particular*, and must grow out of the circumstances of the occasion on which it is offered. Our thanksgivings should express the gratitude *we feel*, not so much for favors in general, as for those particular mercies which are of a nature most deeply to affect us. And our confessions should express the penitence we feel, not so much for sin in general, as for those particular acts of sin, with which our hearts are

most deeply pained. While our supplications and intercession should express the desires we feel, not so much for those general mercies, which all need and need at all times, as for those particular favors which, in present circumstances, are thought most important either for ourselves or others. An Apostle has directed us to "*watch* unto prayer." The import of this injunction may be, that we are to watch the dealings of providence, the suggestions of scripture, and the motions of the Spirit on our own hearts, that we may derive from all, not only encouragement in prayer, but new and various matter to be made the subject of our daily devotions.

Public prayers, in which large and promiscuous assemblies are expected to unite, may not admit, perhaps, of all that particularity which has been here recommended. And yet there is room, even in these, for strict appropriateness, which would secure endless variety. No two public occasions are in all respects alike. If, then, public prayers were made to grow out of the occasions on which they were offered, and to express what ought to be the present views and feelings of the worshippers, they could

never become uninteresting or formal. But in our more *private* supplications, and especially those of the closet, the utmost freedom and particularity may be indulged. We may go to our heavenly Father, and thank him for particular mercies, and confess particular instances of sin, and implore particular favors for ourselves and others, detailing circumstances, and calling persons and things by name, without reserve. We may come with freedom to the mercy seat, and literally converse with God, as a man with his friend. Prayer conducted after this manner will always be interesting to the pious heart; and it is because, from false notions of propriety, or for other reasons, this freedom and particularity of manner are avoided, that Christians lose in so great a degree the comfort and benefit of their seasons of devotion. How long would it be before conversation with an earthly friend would become dull and uninteresting, if it related always to the same topics, and was couched in nearly the same terms? And why should communion with our heavenly Friend be clogged with formalities, which would render intercourse with any other being tedious and irksome?

6. In connexion with the last general remark, it may be observed again, that *fervent, effectual* prayer not only expresses the real feelings of the worshipper, but is the result of *strong* feeling. It is the pouring out of an overflowing gratitude; the promptings of a heart bleeding for sin; the offering up of intense and unconquerable desires

No considerations will be more likely to add fervency to prayer, than those of our *own necessities and helplessness*, and of the *exclusive ability* of our heavenly Father to bestow the blessings which we seek. We earnestly desire these blessings—greatly need them—and in many instances feel that we *must* have them, or perish. Still, they are above our reach, and the reach of every other creature. They must come from God, if they come at all; and all we can do is to go and beg for them. With impressions such as these, the prayers of the Christian cannot but be fervent. The strongest affections of his soul are enkindled, and his whole heart goes with him, while he approaches the throne of grace and pleads for needed mercy. With strong desire, he looks up to his Father in heaven and says, ‘I am weak, but thou art strong.

I have nothing, but thou hast all things. I come to thee, for there is no other God. If thou reject me, no being in the universe can help me. O Lord, hear ; O Lord, forgive ; O Lord, hearken and do ; defer not for thine own sake, O my God.' He will thus plead, as his Saviour did, ' with *strong crying and tears* ;' and say in the spirit of the determined Patriarch, ' I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me.' This, reader, is humble, importunate prayer. ' This is weakness laying hold of infinite strength.' It is in supplications such as these, that Christians ' have power with God and prevail.'

7. That our prayers may be successful, we must be, not only earnest in them, but *persevering*. Our Saviour once uttered ' a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.' He knew that men, that his own *disciples*, would be likely to faint and be soon discouraged in their prayers. They feel their need of a particular favor ; feel that it must come from God ; and go to him with humility and earnestness. But because, for wise reasons, he does not see fit immediately to answer, and is pleased to try them with difficulties and delay, they become disheartened, lose their engaged-

ness, and give way to the false and paralyzing impression, so far at least as concerns their practice, that prayer is a vain service. Now such persons would do well to remember, that it has been God's usual method, in all periods of the world, to try his children by delay. How long he tried the faith of his ancient people in Egypt, and in Babylon? How long and severely were the primitive Christians tried, in regard to the expected overthrow of idolatry? For how long a period did God delay to answer the cries of his afflicted people, in delivering them from Popish tyranny? And for holy purposes, he sees fit to try his children now in a similar manner. Let them not, then, faint or despond, in view of seeming hindrances and discouragements. Things may look dark to them, which are all light to God. They may see many and great difficulties, where he sees none at all. His blessings may seem to them to linger, and they may be unable to discover the reasons of his dispensations; but he knows what he is doing, and will ultimately satisfy all his people of his truth, his faithfulness, and love.

8. I only add farther, that the prayer which prevails with God must be accom-

panied by correspondent *endeavors to do his will*. If we can earnestly pray for any particular event, we of course earnestly desire it; and if we earnestly desire it, we shall be disposed to labor for its accomplishment. It is in this way, that a sense of dependence on God awakens effort; and the worth of our prayers may always be tested by our zeal and engagedness in duty. Alas, in how many instances does the example of Christians belie their prayers! How often do they pray for that which they never lift a finger to accomplish, and which they thus clearly manifest they have no desire to see accomplished! How can they expect such prayers to prevail with a holy God, unless it be to provoke his wrath?

Having thus endeavored to describe prayer, show what is implied in it, and and what is necessary in order that it may be acceptable and successful, it remains that I present and urge the *motives* to the habitual and faithful performance of this most important duty. But in approaching this part of the subject, topics crowd upon us in such abundance, that we hardly know where, or with what to begin.

I might speak of the *honor* connected

with the performance of prayer. 'When we consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars which thou hast ordained; *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him?*' What are we, poor, sinful, miserable beings, that we should be admitted to the near presence of him who rides upon the circuit of the heavens, and disposes of all beings and worlds, familiarly to converse with him, as a man with his friend? Individuals are sometimes *ashamed* to pray; and ashamed to be known as persons of prayer. But why ashamed? Ashamed to have intercourse with a Monarch—the Monarch of the universe! What *honor*, Christian reader, can be compared with this?

I might also speak of the *pleasures* of prayer; and the feelings of every true Christian would respond to all I could utter on this branch of the subject. The real friends of God engage in prayer, not so much because this is their duty, as because it is their delight. They *love* to pray.

"They *love* to steal awhile away
From every cumbering care,

And spend the hours of setting day
In *humble, grateful prayer*.

They love to think on mercies past,
And future good implore,
And all their cares and sorrows cast
On Him whom they adore."

Of how much *happiness* do those voluntarily deprive themselves, who have yet to learn the pleasures of prayer? How miserably do those cheat their immortal natures, their undying souls, who prefer the gross pleasures of sense and sin, to those which spring from communion with the Holy One?

I might advert to the *indirect advantages* of prayer to those who offer it, returning, like that of the Psalmist, into their own bosoms. On the plain principle, that 'he who walketh with wise men shall be wise,' the characters of those who walk with God on earth and hold much communion with him, will be gradually assimilated to his. They will be, not only godly, but in some measure *god-like*. They will 'be *followers of God*, as dear children.' The power of temptation will be diminished; the love of the world subdued; and they will grow in grace, in strength, in wisdom, in a likeness to God, and in a preparation for heaven.

I might urge, that the duty of prayer is enforced by *examples* of the greatest weight and authority. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and all the Patriarchs, and all the prophets, were men of fervent, prevalent prayer. '*Seven times a day,*' says the Psalmist, 'do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgements.' Daniel 'kneeled upon his knees *three times a day,* and prayed and gave thanks before his God.' Anna 'served God with fastings and prayers *night and day.*' Cornelius 'prayed to God *always.*' And to crown all, it is recorded of our blessed Saviour, that he repeatedly spent whole nights in prayer.

It should be enough to engage all intelligent creatures in the duty of prayer, that such is the *known will and pleasure* of their Creator. His will on this subject has been variously expressed,—in commands, in invitations, and entreaties. 'Pray without ceasing.' 'Watch unto prayer.' 'Call upon me, and I will answer thee.' 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication together with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.' Strange, that the needy children of men should want so much commanding and

exhorting, and this too from the lips of their Creator, to induce them to pray to him ! And stranger still, that after all the commands and exhortations he has given, they should yet be so backward and negligent in this duty !

We are encouraged to pray, not only in the ways already pointed out, but by innumerable and precious *promises*. Promises of this description, expressed in every variety of form, and conveying all the assurance which language can convey, are interspersed throughout the Bible. ‘ Before they call *I will answer* ; and while they are yet speaking, *I will hear*.’ ‘ Ye shall seek me, and *find me*, when ye search for me with all your heart.’ ‘ Ask, and *it shall be given you* ; seek, and *ye shall find* ; knock, and *it shall be opened unto you* : For every one that asketh, *receiveth* ; and he that seeketh, *findeth* ; and to him that knocketh, *it shall be opened*. If a son ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone ? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent ? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion ? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children ; HOW MUCH MORE SHALL YOUR HEAVEN-

LY FATHER GIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THEM THAT ASK HIM?' 'Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and *ye shall receive*, that your joy may be full.'—These are but a specimen of the *many promises* of good things to be bestowed in answer to prayer: the promises of One who changeth not, neither is weary, and whose truth and faithfulness never fail. Encouragement higher and better than this, language surely could not afford.

And the promises of God for our encouragement in prayer, he has abundantly verified in his *providential dispensations*. The Scriptures record numerous instances, which I need not repeat, in which prayer has brought down deliverances and blessings for the people of God, and judgements on his foes. Nor have the promises of God on this subject been vacated; nor has the efficacy of prayer ceased. The blessings which God still bestows in answer to prayer, are manifest to the sense; they are visible, palpable, before the eyes of all men. Let any well informed person consider what that is for which the people of God have been praying, with the greatest frequency and importunity, for the last twenty

or thirty years. And then let him look abroad on the world and see, if the same things precisely have not been bestowed. In what light are we to regard the numerous revivals of religion with which our land has been blessed—the rapid diffusion of Divine knowledge, by means of Bibles, tracts, and Sabbath schools—the raising up and sending forth of hundreds of Missionaries—the success which has followed their labors in different parts of the earth—and the present, cheering indications of approaching latter day glory;—in what light are we to regard all these things, but as so many signal answers to prayer—so many evidences, that God's arm is not shortened, nor his ear heavy, nor his promises forgotten, nor his cause on earth abandoned?

But this brings me to that on which I design chiefly to insist, as a motive to continued, importunate prayer. The people of God are expecting the speedy accomplishment of *great things* for the church. They are expecting that, at no distant period, the religion of the gospel will prevail over all the world—that ignorance, error, vice, oppression, slavery and war will cease—that idolatry, and every species of false religion, will come

to an end—and that ‘the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.’ But what reason have they to expect these great moral changes? And what can *they* do towards accomplishing them? They cannot convert *one* soul; how then shall they engage in the conversion of millions? They cannot produce a revival of religion in a single village; and what can they do towards reviving it over the whole earth? They may indeed engage in the use of means; but they cannot give efficacy to one mean of grace, or crown it with success.—To all this it may be answered, that the expectations of Christians are not founded on what *they* can of themselves do, but on what a God of sovereign mercy and almighty power can do for them. And they expect to be instrumental in the great work to which I have alluded, chiefly, by going to God in all their weakness, and engaging him to act on their behalf. A good man has said, ‘He that hath the *ear* of God, hath his *hand* also.’ Christians know, that *they* cannot accomplish the the promises, and and fill a ruined world with good; but they know that the God in whom they trust can do all this, and

if they go to him in humble, fervent prayer, they believe he will.

In every light except this, in which the children of God can be viewed, they are feeble, ignorant, unworthy creatures, who know and can do comparatively nothing. But when we behold them in the attitude of prayer—humble, earnest, persevering prayer—prostrating themselves before the Almighty, and enlisting his perfections on their behalf;—*here* they seem exalted; they come into a sort of union with the Deity; he is theirs, and they are his; his power, wisdom, goodness and faithfulness are all pledged for them, and nothing is too great for him to accomplish. Without God on their side, his people are weak as other men; but with his Divine perfections enlisted for them, by means of holy prevalent prayer, they are in a sense omnipotent; they can do all things; because God will do all things for them, when inquired of in this way, which their best interest requires. The great adversary of souls has little to fear from anything and everything which the people of God can do, so long as they can be kept from prayer; but,

‘Satan trembles, when he sees
The weakest saint—upon his knees.’

That which is most *most needed* at the present moment, for the success of the gospel at home and abroad, is obviously *an increase of fervent, effectual prayer*. The experience of a thousand ages unites with the voice of inspiration, in bearing witness, that without the accompanying influences of the Spirit, the means of grace will be used in vain. In all places, and under all circumstances, they will be as water spilt on the ground, or as seed sown upon the barren rock. None will be awakened, none converted, and no fruit will be gathered unto life eternal. Indeed, to the success of the gospel, the Spirit should be regarded as all in all. But these needed influences of the Spirit are not bestowed ordinarily, except in answer to fervent prayer. It is prayer, then—humble, prevalent prayer—which the present interests of religion most urgently require. It is the want of such prayer, which clothes the churches at home with sackcloth, and spreads dearth and barrenness round the land. And it is the want of such prayer, more than anything which we can bestow, which damps the energies and limits the successes of our brethren who are laboring in foreign lands.

The call to prayer is loud and imperious from all parts of the field of spiritual labor. 'The barren wastes everywhere need showers of blessing. The heritage of the Lord thirsts for rain. The churches of Christ cry out for a time of refreshing and of renewed fertility. The families of the people of God ; schools for religious education ; missionary labors, at home and abroad ; the institutions of the gospel, in all their diversified operations ; every plan of usefulness ; every attempt of the friends of truth to extend its dominion ;—all cry out together for those spiritual influences, without which the reign of desolation must be perpetual ; and all send us to *prayer*, as our last and only resource.'

Everything, therefore, which ought to have weight with a rational mind, should be regarded as urging the people of God to prayer. Their duty, their honor, their interest, their happiness ; the commands, and promises, and providence of God ; the cause of truth, the example of the Saviour, their own necessities, and the necessities of a world to be converted ;—all are unitedly urging them to prayer. Let them, then, awake at once, and engage with renewed earnestness in

- this most important service. In all their emptiness and weakness, let them go to Him with whom is infinite fulness and strength, and implore his help. Let them plead his love; plead his faithfulness; plead the everlasting covenant and the sure mercies of David, on which he has caused his people to hope. He will not turn away his ear, or break his promise, or deny his blessing. He will open to his people new resources; convert or confound their enemies; encourage their fainting hearts, and strengthen their feeble hands. He will pour out his Spirit in answer to their supplications, and through them, as weak but honored instruments, will carry forward, with resistless power and progress, the triumphs of his holy kingdom.---Again, then, I say, let the people of God awake to this subject, and endeavor to feel, more than they have ever done, the importance of the duty which has been urged. In prayer, they have a resource of which the world are ignorant. In prayer, they
- possess and can exert a far greater power than would be possible in any other way. It is here, emphatically, that their great strength lies. **'PRAYER MOVES THE HAND THAT MOVES THE WORLD.'**

OF
AN

THE
SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

EPHESIANS vi. 18.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

THE Apostle looking upon the Ephesians as militant saints, and fighting, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and the powers of darkness; instructs them, towards the latter end of this chapter, how they might become more than conquerors. To this end he tells them, first of all, where their strength lay; they must "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,"

verse 10; and then gives them a complete armour, which being put on, and the several pieces of it skilfully used, the wiles of Satan will be frustrated, and themselves enabled to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.

1. They must be girded about with the girdle of truth. By error Satan has great advantage; how many, like children, are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine! but a judgment rightly informed and well settled, that buys the truth and will by no means sell it, has a great influence upon a Christian's steadfastness and growth in grace.

2. They must have on the breast-plate of righteousness; they must be righteous in heart, righteous in sincerity. A conscience, purged from dead works, is a better defence than a wall of brass. Satan cannot so easily disquiet them that are sincere, neither is he able to corrupt them; their holiness being true, sin is hated, the allurements unto sin are contemned, and God is followed hard after.

3. Their feet must be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. They must be encouraged by that peace which

the gospel publishes, to run the way of God's commandments ; and that though those ways are never so difficult and unpleasant to flesh and blood, they must hold fast the profession of their faith, and depart from evil, and go in the path that is called holy ; though by thus doing, they never-so-much expose, and make themselves a prey.

4. Above all, they must take the shield of faith, whereby they may quench the fiery darts of the wicked. Satan's temptations are darts ; he does design our wounding, our pain, our death, in shooting of them : and these darts may well be called fiery ; they are shot from hell, and a hell in the conscience they make, if they are not quenched ; but faith is a shield to repel and beat them back : Faith makes application of the righteousness and strength of Christ ; and by this means, not only former wounds are assuaged and healed, but the soul is more secured for the future.

5. The helmet of salvation must cover their heads in this day of battle with evil angels. A lively hope of salvation is very encouraging both unto patient continuo-

ance in well-doing, and also unto suffering for the sake of righteousness.

6. The Apostle tells them, that the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, must be made use of. If this word be understood, believed, thought on, loved, stood in awe of; if it thus abide in us, we shall be strong, and overcome the evil one.

These are the pieces of the armour of God. But in this combat with the devil, is there not need of auxiliary forces? certainly there is a necessity of succour from heaven. The captain, therefore, of our salvation, must be looked unto, and divine aid continually implored and begged for. By prayer we have power with God, and power against our spiritual enemies. No wonder that the apostle enjoins "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." &c.

The text may be divided into these parts:

1. Here is a *duty commanded*, in the performance of which lies safety; and that is, *praying*.

2. The *extent of this duty*, it must be *always*, and it must be *with all prayer*.

3. The due qualifications of this duty, which are these following :

1st, It must be *in the Spirit*.

2d, It must be *with watching*.

3d, It must be *with all perseverance*.

4. It must be *with a public spirit* ; we must pray for all saints, as well as for ourselves, since they are engaged in the same war.

That these words may be better understood, I shall answer these several questions :

1. Is there any difference between prayer and supplication ? I answer, the word which is translated prayer, does intimate we have to do with God in prayer : to him we are to direct our petitions as an hearer, as an helper. The word which is translated supplication, does intimate, that there must be an acknowledgement of our own indigency and wants, and a looking to the all sufficient Lord for supply.

2. Another question is this : What is meant by praying always ? I answer, the Greek phrase which the Holy Ghost useth, signifies, *To pray every opportunity that is offered*. This text gives no encouragement unto the fond sect of the

Euchites, who thought that prayer was to be their whole business: No, no; there are other duties which God calls for, and which this of prayer must not jostle out. But all those opportunities which are afforded for prayer, must be heedfully observed, joyfully laid hold on, and diligently improved. This is to pray always. It is said of Mephibosheth, that he did eat always, or continually at the king's table, 2 Sam. ix. 13. What! shall we from hence infer, that he spent day and night in nothing but eating? no such matter; but when the season of meal-time came, he was present. So to pray always, is to pray whenever prayer is seasonable.

3. A third question is, What is meant by all prayer? Bullinger refers this to the intention of the mind; saying, that in this duty, there must be all possible devotion, and intentness, and fervency of heart. But Musculus understands prayer of every sort; and indeed all kinds of prayer which God has appointed are needful, and the Lord is ready by the communications of his grace, to encourage to the practice of this duty in the full extent and latitude of it.

4. Another question is this: What are we to understand by prayer in the spirit? Some refer this clause to the thing asked, as if we should slight all worldly enjoyments, and ask only for those blessings that are spiritual. It is confessed that spiritual blessings are to be most prized, and to be begged with the greatest importunity; but yet temporal mercies may also with submission be desired. Daily bread we are allowed to ask for; and that bread is sweetest, and most blest, that is the fruit of prayer. Others observe, and rightly, that, this passage, praying in the spirit, may have relation both to the Spirit of God, and the spirit of him that prays.

It may have relation unto the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost "makes intercession for believers, according to the will of God; he helps their infirmities, who of themselves know not what to pray for as they ought." Rom. viii. 26, 27.

It may have relation unto the spirit of him that prays. Prayer must be the offspring of the heart, or else it will not be of any value or efficacy. The spirit of a man must understand what, and the worth of what is prayed for, and the af-

fections must be stirred in order to the attainment of it.

5. A fifth question is, what are we to understand by watching unto prayer with all perseverance? We must watch over our hearts, and watch for God. and this must be with continuance; unless we continue to watch and pray, we may quickly enter and fall into temptation. And since all militant saints are in danger as well as we, and stand in so near relation to Christ and to us, we should be much concerned for them, so as to desire their safety and welfare as our own.

There are SIX DOCTRINES which these words afford us.—

1. A Christian's security lies very much in praying always.

2. All prayer is of concernment to be used.

3. Prayer, when rightly performed; is supplication in the spirit.

4. In prayer, watching is a necessary ingredient.

5. We must persevere if we would speed in prayer.

6. Our spirits must be so public, as to supplicate for all the saints as well as for ourselves.

I begin with the first of these doctrines, That a Christian's security lies very much in praying always. Although he be armed from head to foot with the armour of God ; which, if any in the world, is armour of proof, yet he is not safe without prayer. Saints in Scripture have looked upon the throne of grace as their asylum and sanctuary, and have come here for refuge and strength in their troubles and temptations. David when he perceived the deceit and hatred of his adversaries, who fought against him without cause, says, it was his course, and truly it was a wise one, to give himself unto prayer, Ps. cix. 4. When his soul was among lions, and he dwelt among those that were set on fire, he " then cries unto God that performed all things for him," Psalm lvii. 2. When the Apostle Paul was buffeted by the messenger of Satan, he " besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him," and had this answer, " My grace is sufficient for thee," 2Cor. xii. 7—9. Nay, the very Captain of our salvation, Christ himself, not only used the word of God in temptation, and overcame the devil by Scripture weapons, but also he was won-

derfully fervent in prayer : "In the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared." Heb. v. 7.

I shall speak unto this doctrine in the following order. *First*, Give you a definition of prayer, that you may know what it is. *Secondly*, Inform you what it is to pray always. *Thirdly*, Show you why a Christian's security lies in prayer. *Fourthly*, Give you some reasons why he should be always praying. And, *lastly*. Make application.

In the *first* place, I am to give you a definition of prayer that you may understand the nature of it. An old author gives this description, 'Prayer is an ascension of the mind unto God, and asking those things which are convenient, from him. The mind must ascend as well as the voice and both must be directed unto God alone; and those things only must be desired which the wise and gracious God sees convenient. Aquinas defines prayer, 'an act of the practical understanding, explaining the desire of the will, and requesting something from

another," which being applied unto God, amounts to this much; that both the mind and will do act in prayer; the mind makes known what the will desires. "Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee," Psalm xxxviii. 9. And then likewise, there is an earnest craving to have this desire satisfied. "O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." Psalm xc. 14.

But a more full definition of prayer is this; Prayer is a duty performed unto God by sensible and believing souls, in which they ask for things according to his will, in the name of Christ, with thanksgiving for what has already been received. This definition I shall take in pieces, and explain the parts of it.

I. Prayer is a duty.—It is part of that homage and worship which we owe to God: this is evident by the light of nature; the heathen mariners "cried unto the Lord" for preservation in a storm, Jonah i.; but it is more evident by Scripture light: commands to pray are frequent. And he that does restrain prayer, casts off the fear of God, and says unto the Almighty, Depart from me, Job xxi. 14,

15. Prayer is a duty, for we are obliged to it by a precept; and that precept is for our profit: we need help from heaven, and our wants that are of the greatest concernment to be supplied, can be supplied by none but by him that is all sufficient; and when we cry to him, we give him glory; for it argues we believe his power and mercy, which prove him able and ready to succour and relieve us.

II. Prayer is to be performed unto God, and to him only.—“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,” Matt. iv. 10. “Unto thee, my God and my King, will I pray. I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.” Psalm v. 2, 3. God’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. He is able to do, not only to the utmost of our desires, but “exceeding abundantly above all that we” can either “ask or think,” Eph. iii. 20. The Papists dangerously corrupt holy worship by their sinful prayers to angels and saints, and especially to the virgin Mary. Cardinal Bonaventure has blotted out the name of *Lord* in the book of the Psalms, and put in the name of *Lady*, and teaches Chris-

tians to ask the same things, of the virgin Mary, which David asked for at the hands of God himself. Under the Old Testament we find that believers directed their supplications to God himself, and found him ready to hear and save; and under the gospel, where the manifestation and communication of his grace are more full and plenteous, is there need to go to any other? No, no; "one God can supply our needs, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Phil. iv. 19.

III. Those that pray, must be sensible.—Ignorance, and unbelief, and hardness of heart, make the words of prayer a mockery and abomination. They that pray, therefore, must be sensible of their sins, of their needs, of their unworthiness to have those needs supplied; finally, they must be sensible that none can help them but the God they are praying to.


1. They must be sensible of their sins.—"I acknowledge my transgressions," says David, "and my sin is ever before me." Psalm li. 3. "For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us; for our trans-

gressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them," Isa. lix. 12. Sin must be acknowledged with shame and sorrow, else it will separate between God and us, and prove a cloud, through which our prayers will never pass. There must be such a sense of sin as implies a hatred and weariness of it; for if the heart out of love and liking of it, has a regard to sin, God's ear will be deaf, and his mercies restrained. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer." Psalm lxvi. 18.

2. They that pray must be sensible of their needs.—All the posterity of Adam are needy, how rich and full soever they imagine themselves. The first man being a public person, had the whole stock in his own hand, and having lost it, has beggared his whole progeny; we are "all come short of the glory of God," as descended from Adam; we are flesh, and in "our flesh dwelleth no good thing." This must be understood and believed, poverty of spirit Christ commends, and pronounces those that are thus poor, "blessed," Matt. v. 3. For they that perceive "they are wretched,

and miserable, and empty, and naked," will cry the louder to the Lord "for gold tried in the fire to enrich them, and white raiment that they may be clothed." The poor man that is ready to starve for hunger, how does he cry out 'Bread, for the Lord's sake, bread,' for he sees his need of it. The condemned malefactor, how does he roar out for a pardon? Because he sees his life must quickly go, without it. And were we but better acquainted with our wants, oh what strong cries would come from us, that sin might be forgiven, that grace might be wrought, that peace might be spoken, that spiritual maladies might be healed! We all need these things as much and more than the hungry stand in need of bread.

3. They that pray must be sensible of their unworthiness to have their need supplied.—Paul cries out, he was "less than the least of all saints;" and Jacob, that he was "less than the least of mercies." Job says, "Behold I am vile, and I abhor myself." We cannot lay claim to any thing as our due, but wrath and the curse. Whatever God bestows, it must be reckoned given, "not of debt, but of pure and free grace," Rom. iv.



Daniel in prayer disclaims all merit in his righteousness, acknowledges that "confusion of face belonged to him and to Israel, because of their rebellions;" and says expressly, "We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies," Dan. ix. 18. We may beg indeed for the greatest mercies--and the greater, the surer we are to speed; for God is most liberal of the greatest; but at the same time we must be sensible that the least mercy is too good for such evil ones as we are.

4. They that pray must be sensible that none can help them but the God they are praying to.--"Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and multitude of mountains,"--(the firmest things on earth will fail and deceive our hopes,)--"truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel," Jer. iii. 23. Therefore David lays this charge upon his soul, "to wait only upon God, and to have all its expectation from him. God will be seriously sought unto, when we are under the power of this conviction, that "no other helper can be found."

IV. It follows in the definition, that those that pray must be believing souls. —Faith is a grace that is required in all their duties; if this be wanting, God will not be honored by our duties, nor ourselves advantaged. Though we hear never so often, if the word be not mixed with faith, it will not profit us, Heb. iv. 2.; and unless our prayers are prayers in faith, they will not be effectual. Those that pray indeed, must be believers.

1. They must believe "that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 6.; they must have right apprehensions of his gracious nature, and of his good will towards men. He is willing to be reconciled, and has himself, without being sought unto, contrived a way how a sinner's peace may be made. He sends ambassadors to them to treat about it, and entreat those that have offended him, that they would be no longer enemies by wicked works. He has declared, that "fury is not in him" towards those that are desirous of mercy, and that he does delight in nothing more than in compassion; and that if any do understand and seek him, he is more willing to

be found, than they can be eager to find him. These things being rightly conceived, encourage prayer; and Satan by suggesting the contrary, draws off many from this duty.

2. They that pray aright must, by believing, be interested in Christ the Mediator. Christ is "the way, and no man cometh unto the Father but by him," John xiv. 6. Christ must be by faith received as the gospel offers him; that is, as a "Prince and a Saviour;" and by this faith, being united to him, God looks upon believers as the brethren of Christ, as the spouse of Christ, nay, which is nearer, as Christ's members; and will deny them nothing. Those that belong to Christ, God is a God to them, and a Father to them as he is to Christ himself, and loves them as he loved Christ; John xx. 17. xvii. 23.; surely he will then grant them their requests.

3. They that pray must by faith rely upon the promises that God has made of hearing.—He has said, "that they that ask shall receive, that they which seek shall find, and to them that knock it shall be opened," Matt. vii. 7. And for further encouragement, because the Spir-

it teaches what to ask, and how to ask, Christ assures us, that God will more readily give his Spirit to those that ask him, than earthly parents bread unto their hungry children, "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask him?" Luke xi. 13. How comprehensive a promise is the promise of the Spirit? His work is to apply that salvation which Christ has purchased: and is sent on purpose that he may indite such petitions for the saints as will find audience. How plainly has the Lord said, that "his eye is upon the righteous, and his ear open to their prayers?" Psalm xxxiv. 15. Such words should be rested on when we engage in this duty.

4. The more confidently they that pray conclude the performance of God's promises, the more certainly will they be accomplished.—Therefore we are commanded to ask "in faith nothing wavering," James i. 6. ; and we are encouraged to draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, Heb. x. 22. ; and hearken to our Lord himself, "therefore

I say unto you, whatever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them," Mark xi. 24. If we did but more firmly believe that God, according to his covenant, for his Son's sake, has pardoned sin; and will heal our souls of their distempers, and will give grace sufficient, and make us to grow and increase with the increases of God; verily his promises would appear to be real, and "according to our faith it would be to us." Thus you see how those that pray must be believers.

V. In prayer, things must be asked for, according to the will of God.—"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us," 1 John v. 14. Christ tells his disciples, "if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done to you," John xv. 7. The word abiding in us declares the will of God, and regulates our wills; and then what we will, we shall have; Luther said, 'Let my will be done, because my will, O Lord, is the same with thine.'

I do not wonder that many of the heathens reasoned against prayer; they being unacquainted with the mind of God, knew not what to ask for. But in the Scripture God has declared his mind to us, and that is our directory.

There is a three-fold will of God, which we are to regard in prayer—his will of purpose, of precept, and of promise.

1. His will of purpose.—God's purpose concerning his people, is wise and gracious, therefore it is called "the good pleasure of his goodness," by the apostle, 2 Thess. i. 11.; and it was but reason that this purpose should be submitted to. We may ask sometimes for that which it may not be fit for us to receive. In temporals especially we are at a loss; and are not able to determine what measure of such kind mercies is most meet for us. When therefore we beg for the continuance of life, the prolonging or restoring of health, the enjoyment of outward comforts; all must be done with this proviso, that the will and purpose of God may stand and be accomplished; for we may conclude, that when the Lord denies outward mercies, which we with submission

beg for, he intends kindness in that very denial.

2. In prayer God's will of precept is to be regarded.—Whatever he commands us to do we may with boldness go to him for strength, which may enable us for the performance. The Lord calls and commands Israel to turn. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ephraim turns this into prayer, "turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God," Jer. xxxi. 18. God commanded David to keep his precepts diligently. David takes hold of this, and cries out, "Oh that my ways were directed, that I might keep thy statutes!" Psalm cxix. 4, 5. He requires that we should love and fear him; we may without presumption beg that he would "circumcise our hearts to love him, and put his fear into our hearts, that we may not depart from him."

3. In prayer God's will of promise is also to be eyed.—And though the promises of the life that now is, belong to believers, yet especially they prize and plead the promises of spiritual and everlasting blessings. These we are to look

upon "as exceeding great and precious," and sure promises; and to beg, that by them "we may be made partakers of the divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust," 2 Pet. i. 4. What can the Lord promise more than he does? "The Lord God is a sun, and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Psalm lxxxiv. 11. When we entreat him to make good his promises, we do in effect but entreat him to glorify his power and love, his truth and faithfulness.

VI. Prayer must be in the name of Christ.—What name more prevalent? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." When we make use of the mediation of Christ, we go the way to speed. The Papists make use of the mediation of angels and departed saints. But the apostle tells us, as of "one God," so of one "mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Saints indeed on earth may pray one for another, because God has commanded it; it maintains love among them, and the strongest need the prayers of the weak-

er. How earnestly does the apostle Paul beseech the believing Romans that they would strive together with him in their prayers to God for him, Rom. xv. 30. But not a word of prayer directed to any saint in Scripture. And when Jacob was in distress, and the angels of God met him, he said, "this is God's host;" but he begged nothing of them, but wrestles with God himself, and, as a prince, prevailed.

We must pray in the name of Christ; and there are four things which we are to have an eye to—

1. The satisfaction of Christ.—He has been "wounded for transgression," he "bare the curse;" so that we may beg with confidence to be delivered from it. He has made peace by the blood of his cross; we have encouragement to beseech the Lord to be reconciled, and that he would no longer be a foe, but a father to us.

2. We are to eye the purchase of Christ.—He has purchased all the blessings of the new covenant. Heaven itself is called "a purchased possession," Eph. 1. 14. Christ paid a price for it, that it might be ours. It is not only an

act of grace, but an act of righteousness in God, considering what Christ has paid for, to forgive sin, and to give salvation.

3. We are to eye the intercession of Christ.—“He is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them,” Heb. vii. 25. Our great High Priest is passed into the heavens, and his work is there, to pray for believers, and his Father hears him always. How can prayers miscarry that are backed with the intercession of such an one?

4. We are to eye the strength of Christ, and his assistance.—Rightly to pray is a matter of difficulty; Christ by his Spirit is ready to help the infirmities of believers; so that notwithstanding all discouragement and opposition from within and from beneath, they shall make something of this duty of prayer, and obtain the blessing.

VII. In prayer there must be thanksgiving for what has been already received. Praise is the sublimest part of prayer. Praise is a debt; and how vast is the debt, if we consider the multitude, greatness, freeness, and continuance of

mercies? Praise sweetens prayer; nothing more pleasing to God, nothing more pleasant to ourselves. And to give thanks for benefits received, is as effectual a way to prevail for more mercy, as the most vehement and strongest cries. O, therefore, that all who pray, would also "praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Psalm cvii. 8. Thus have I explained the definition, and opened the nature of prayer to you.

In the *second* place I am to inform you what it is to *pray always*. This I have touched upon already, but shall more fully speak of in these particulars.

1. To pray always implies, being always in a disposition and frame to pray when God requires it.—The heart must be reconciled to this duty, and fall in love with it, and go to the throne of grace with alacrity. Much may be got at the mercy-seat; the unsearchable riches of Christ are unlocked, and we may take as much as the hand of faith can grasp, without being checked or upbraided. The God whom we have to do with, "gives liberally and like himself," James i. 5. The heart should be forward to

pray, and be weary of, and through grace subdue more and more that evil which, alas, is "present when good is about to be performed," Rom. vii. 21.

2. To pray always implies, laying hold of all opportunities to pray, that are graciously vouchsafed to us.—Whenever there is a meet season and a motion to pray, we should catch such an occasion by the forelock, for when once it is past, it is past recalling. Stated times of prayer ordinarily, should in no wise be neglected; and when there are extraordinary calls to this duty, they should by all means be heeded.

3. To pray always implies, praying in every state and condition.—In sickness, in health, in prosperity, in adversity, prayer is to be used; without prayer, sickness will be unsanctified, and an uncomfortable load; and if it be taken off, it will be in anger; without prayer, health will be a judgment, and only serve to encourage a neglect of the soul and another world; without prayer adversity will be intolerable, and prosperity will be a snare, and occasion forgetfulness of God, and a daring to rebel against him. No condition should cause a cessation of

prayer, for the apostle says, "pray without ceasing," 1 Thess. v. 17.

4. To pray always implies, not to let fall any suit till it be granted.—We must not faint in prayer, nor give over, though we do not presently speed, Luke xviii.

1. "He spake a parable to them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Importunity prevailed with an unrighteous judge, surely then it will be prevalent with the Father of mercies. God does not presently grant sometimes, to try whether we duly esteem mercies; and if we do, we shall think them worth our while to pray still for them, and wait till they are given.

5. To pray always implies, not to give over praying while we are on earth.—This ordinance we must never be above; for we always need to engage in it. Our life is a continued warfare, we have need to pray for defence and victory; our knowledge and grace is imperfect, we have need to pray for the increase of both, and that we may be helped to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God.

In the *third* place, I am to tell you, why a Christian's security lies in prayer

1. Prayer engages God on a Christian's side.—He promises to hear the cry of the righteous ones ; and hearing their cry implies the engaging of his power and goodness for their supply and safety. In prayer there is an acting of holy desires, unto which satisfaction is assured ; and there is an acting of trust and faith, and God will show himself strong in behalf of them that fly unto his name, as to a tower of defence, and rely upon his everlasting arm. He that believes, and has his expectation from the Lord, shall not be ashamed. The apostle hesitates not to say, "whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord, shall be saved," Rom. x. 13 ; that is, whosoever calls with faith and fervency. Such calling engages God for us, and "if He be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. Our iniquities, though never so strong, he can easily subdue ; the world, and the god of the world, are weak compared with the Almighty. He can deliver from the evil world, from the evil one, from every evil work, and preserve us to his heavenly kingdom.

2. Prayer weakens the flesh, with the affections and lusts of it.—Our great

danger is from these home-bred enemies; "our lusts do war against our souls," 1 Pet. ii. 11; and the apostle threatens believers, "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," Rom. viii. 13. What course does David take to obtain the victory over his corruptions? he prays against them.—"Cleanse me from secret faults; keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins. Let no iniquity have dominion over me! Create in me a clean heart, and uphold me with thy free Spirit!" These and such like were his cries, and he did not cry in vain. The believer, in prayer, pleads that it is for God's honor to kill corruption, that it is his declared will, even man's sanctification; that it is his work to sanctify; that he has promised to sanctify throughout, in body, soul, and spirit; and he is faithful and therefore will do it, 1 Thess. v. 23, 24. He pleads, that Christ died that he might redeem and purify from iniquity; that he might cleanse his church, and "present it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it might be holy, and without blemish," Eph. v. 27. And such pleas

are effectual to the obtaining of grace, and motifying the deeds of the body.

3. A Christian's security lies in prayer, for prayer obtains better things than the world can boast of. Let the world allure by its strongest baits, and present unto the Christian the greatest gains, the sweetest pleasures, yet blessings more valuable are to be got at the throne of grace. The heart in prayer is taken up with the thoughts of, and eager desires after, the privilege of reconciliation and adoption, communion with God, and the communications of his grace and Spirit, an eternal weight of glory, a crown of life, an enduring substance, fulness of joy, and pleasures forever more, Psalm xvi. These are the things above, that in prayer are sought; and what are things below in comparison? The heart that is placed on these, is the better armed against the world: as long as spiritual and eternal blessings are secured, the world is neither desired, nor dreaded by it.

4. Prayer is an undermining of Satan. The powers of hell have felt the force of this duty. Christ commanded his disciples to pray, when he perceived the devil

about to winnow them : " Pray that ye enter not into temptation," Luke xxii. 40. If as oft as we are assaulted by the tempter, we did but look unto the Lord for grace to help in the time of need, temptation would be very unsuccessful. Two things are done in prayer against Satan ; by our confession of sins, this accuser is silenced ; by petition, grace is obtained to withstand him.

By confession of sin this accuser is silenced. Satan is styled, " the accuser of the brethren ;" and to show how malicious and eager he is in his accusations, he is said to " accuse them day and night before God," Rev. xii. 10. But in prayer, believers bring bills of indictment against themselves ; not only all that Satan can truly lay to their charge, do they also lay to their own charge ; but also all that God has against them, they acknowledge ; they cover not their sins, but confess and aggravate them ; they blame and judge themselves. And how earnest are they that sin confessed may be pardoned, and purged away by the blood of Christ ? Now Satan's mouth is stopped ; his charge signifies nothing ; for thus confessing sin, and looking unto

Jesus for cleansing as well as atonement, "God is faithful and just to forgive them their sins, and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness," 1 John i. 9.

By petition, grace is obtained to withstand Satan. The apostle Paul, when buffeted by the devil, falls to prayer, and what answer has he? The Lord said unto him, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And the apostle is satisfied that, the power of Christ rested on him. Prayer brings us to the God of Peace, who promises to tread Satan under our feet shortly, Rom. xvi. 20. By prayer wisdom is derived from God; and the more wise the Father of lights makes us, the better we understand the devil's wiles, and his design is seen through, which is to deceive, to defile, and at last to murder souls. And as wisdom is increased, so faith, and love, and fear, and other graces, by prayer; and the more we believe God, the less credit we shall give the evil one; the more we love God, the more we shall hate that evil which we are tempted to; the more we fear the Lord, the more will our hearts be united to him; and it will

be a matter of great difficulty to persuade us unto departing from him.

5. A Christian's security lies in prayer, for a prayer is a great means to make every other ordinance effectual for our safety and spiritual advantage. The word of God and prayer are coupled together: "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word," Acts vi. 4. Our sermons which we preach unto you, should be begged from heaven; they should be begun, ended, followed after with prayer; and if you that are hearers would but help us herein by prayer, it would be in effect to help yourselves. If there were but more praying before you come to the sanctuary, that you might be taught to profit, so many sermons would not be lost; so much seed would not be sown in vain. Prayer sets an edge upon the word, and makes it quick and powerful to kill sin, and keep off Satan. Prayer works the word into the heart, and being hid there, is a mighty preservative against iniquity. There is a spiritual instinct in believers to join prayer with every ordinance of God; because they know that ordinances cannot secure or benefit them, except the Lord

concur and work along with them. I have proved that a Christian's security lies in prayer.

In the *fourth* place, I am to give you some reasons why we ought to pray always.

1. We should pray always, because God is always ready to hear. "The Lord's ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear," Isa. lix. 1. He hearkens after prayer, and "looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God." Psalm xiv. 2. The Father is said to seek for right worshippers, namely, those that worship him in spirit and in truth, John iv. 23. We have therefore encouragement at all times to trust in him, and at all times to pour out our souls before him. "God is a refuge for us, Selah." Psalm xii. 8. Verily, seeking of God in sincerity, never was yet in vain, and never will be. God has heard sinners then, when they perhaps have little thought he minded them. When Ephriam bemoaned himself, was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, was ashamed, and confounded because of his evil ways, and cried, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned ;"

says God, "I have heard him, I have surely heard Ephraim," Jer. xxxi. 18, 19; and gives him to understand, that "he was a dear son, a pleasant child, and that he would surely have mercy on him." There is not a tear but God has a bottle to put it in, nor a sigh but God observes it, nor a true desire, but he is ready to satisfy.

2. We should pray always, because Christ always intercedes; "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25. The prayers of believers will be well seconded. This Angel of the covenant has incense sufficient to perfume, and to make the prayers of all the saints at all times acceptable. Christ in heaven is always presenting to his Father his sufferings, and by his sufferings all that we pray for has been purchased. His blood therefore is said to speak in Scripture, and it "speaks better things than that of Abel," Heb. xii. 24. The blood of Christ cries in God's ears, on the behalf of those that pray, that "the curse that Christ hath borne may be removed from them; that the sins for which Christ was wound-

ed, may be forgiven them ; and that out of the fulness of Christ they may receive, and grace for grace."

3. We should pray always, because the Spirit is always ready to help our infirmities. 'This Spirit Christ promised, and, according to his promise, sent him ; and this Spirit is styled the "Spirit of grace and supplications," Zech. xii. 10. ; for he gives grace and ability to make supplications acceptable. And this Spirit abides with believers always. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, which shall abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him ; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you," John xiv. 16, 17. The Spirit is ready to instruct us what to pray for, to remove the load of indisposition to this duty, to quicken our deadness therein, to enlarge our hearts in desires after the God of all grace, to strengthen us to wrestle for a blessing. And truly God is not to be prevailed with, but by the mediation of his Son, and by the strength of his own Spirit.

4. We should pray always, because Satan is always forward to assault us. Satan is compared to a lion in Scripture. And Ælian observes concerning the lion, that if at any time he is beaten back, he retires with his face towards you, as being ready upon the least encouragement, to make another attempt. In like manner Satan watches, has his eye always upon us, and is ever forward to tempt; and should not we be ever forward to pray? Our whole life is a time of temptation; wicked spirits are continually engaged against us. "We wrestle," says the apostle, "with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places." These enemies are invisible, so it is more difficult to withstand them; they are too subtle, and too strong for us; we had need therefore to pray without ceasing, since they cease not endeavouring to bring us both to sin and ruin.

5. We should pray always, because corruption will quickly recruit, and recover strength upon the least neglect of prayer. Had David been praying when he was sleeping so long in the day time; or after his sleep had been ended, had he

gone to the throne of grace, instead of idly walking upon the roof of his palace ; nay, when first he cast his eyes on Bathsheba, if he had presently looked up to heaven and cried, that that spark of concupiscence might have been extinguished before it set him in a flame ; his foul fall, and the doleful consequences of it, might have been prevented. But duty was neglected, and lust took the advantage of that neglect, and he was hurried into two as heinous sins almost as *can* possibly be committed : 2 Sam. xi. Experience shows us, that if we omit, or are slight in prayer, that day our passions are most easily stirred, and our lusts get ground. Thus Amalek prevailed when Moses' hands began to hang down ; but when they were held up towards heaven, Israel had the better.

I come, in the *last* place, to the application. And if the Christian's security lies so much in praying always,

The first use is of instruction, concerning the extreme danger that prayerless souls are in. It will be faithfulness and kindness to make such sensible of their danger ; therefore I shall a little stay up-

on it, and manifest their peril in these particulars.

1. Those that are strangers to prayer, God is against them. O dreadful ! What is God ? And who are they ? Who can stand before his indigation ? Who can defend himself against that arm that is omnipotent ? The mountains quake, the hills melt, the devils tremble before this God ; the whole world compared with him, " is but as the drop of the bucket, and the small dust on the balance, and all the inhabitants of the world are nothing, less than nothing, and vanity," Isa. xl. 15. 17.. Surely it is fearful to have so glorious and great a God an enemy. But an enemy he is unto all that count not his love and favour worth the praying for. Those that will not entreat him to be reconciled, it is a sign they neither value his love nor fear his wrath ; and under wrath they are unquestionably.

2. Those that are strangers to prayer, their mercies are not mercies indeed to them ; that threatening is fulfilled upon them, " i will send a curse upon you, and will curse your blessings," Mal. ii. 2. Prayer will turn curses into blessings. Afflictions are part of the curse inflicted

because of sin, but prayer alters the nature of them; for the sanctification of them being begged and granted, they work together for the good of them that feel them. Affliction yields "the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby," says the Apostle. On the other side, where prayer is not, blessings are a snare, and the good things which are received, work together for the harm and ruin of those that do enjoy them. There is a spirit of slumber that has seized on them in the midst of their enjoyments, and their table, their plenty, their abundance becomes "a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recoinpence to them," Rom. xi. 8,9.

3. Those that are strangers to prayer, Satan is endeavouring their ruin, and there is none to hinder him. Satan is said in Scripture to fill the hearts of the ungodly, to keep possession of them, and to work in the children of disobedience. The devil is come down with great wrath; and like a roaring lion, he walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. And truly he finds abundant prey, for most watch not at all, pray not at all against him. Those that pray not, are led cap-


tive by Satan at his pleasure, and they do not care or desire to have his snare broken, nor themselves recovered.

4. Those that are strangers to prayer, how certain is it, that, continuing as they are, they will miss of those great things revealed in the gospel, since they count them not worth their seeking! The gospel informs us of the one thing needful, of the pearl of great price, of the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and this is the law that is established, that they who would have these things must seek them. They that seek them not, understand not their worth, nor their own need, and therefore certainly and justly go without them.

5. Those that are strangers to prayer, are in danger of meeting with a deaf ear, when cries are extorted by calamity. O read and tremble, Prov. i. 26—28. "I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh, when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." The meaning is this, that

when cries are extorted merely by distress, and only the removal of calamity is desired, there being no true humiliation for sin, nor desire to be reformed, all such cries will be neglected. If you will not seek the Lord while he may be found, nor call upon him while he is near, when you cry in extremity, he may be far off from you.

6. Those that are strangers to prayer, should consider, that quickly the accepted time, which they improve not, will be past, and then they shall beg, but must certainly be denied. We read in Scripture of calls that no heed was given to. When the foolish virgins came after the door was shut, and said, "Lord, Lord, open unto us;" alas, they spake too late, the door was not opened; but the reply is, "I know you not whence you are." When the rich man begged for a drop of water to cool his tongue, being tormented in the flame, this was not granted; to intimate that not the least mitigation of torment in hell is to be looked for. All at last will be ready to pray, Lord, open the door that lets into thy kingdom and glory! Lord, vouchsafe a little ease and respite in the midst of our excessive ag-



onies and sorrows ! But oh, God's ear will be shut then eternally as well as heaven's gate, and his mercy clean gone forever ! What madness is it then to waste all our accepted time, and not to come to the throne of grace, before the day of grace comes to an end.

The second use shall be of caution. Two things you are to be cautioned about :

1. Take heed of resting in prayer itself, in the bare duty done. Prayer is your security, not in itself considered, but because it "leads you to the rock that is higher than you," Psalm lxi. 2. Prayer puts you under the Lord's wing, and you are covered with his feathers, and his truth becomes your shield and buckler. They that trust in the mere form, vainly imagining, that speaking the words of prayer will help them ; they use prayer like a charm, and are unacquainted with the right manner of praying.

2. Take heed of thinking that any kind of prayer will secure you, and engage God for you. Unbelieving prayers, where Christ is not relied on for audience ; cold and careless prayers, where the things prayed for are not prized ; hy-

pocritical prayers, where the heart is not indeed engaged, will not reach God's ear, will not fetch the blessing. Sin's bow will abide in strength, notwithstanding these prayers ; nor will the strong holds of Satan be thrown down by them.

The third use shall be of exhortation unto this duty of prayer. The arguments to persuade you are these following.

1. Scripture commands are very frequent, which require this duty. How often is prayer called for ; and not only the Lord's authority in these commands is to be regarded, but also his goodness ; he does not require prayer, that he may receive from us, for he is so much above us that he needs us not, nor our peformances ; and so infinitely perfect, that there can be no addition to the perfection of his being, or his blessedness ; but therefore the Lord calls us to " pray always," Luke xxi. 36. " to pray every where," 1 Tim. ii. 8. " to continue instant in prayer," Rom. xii. 12. " in every thing, by prayer and supplication, to make our requests known unto God," Phil. iv. 6. ; because he is willing to give what we need, and to communicate that mercy, without which we must needs be miserable.

2. The efficacy of prayer should persuade to prayer.—He that bids you seek his face, if your hearts echo back, "Thy face, Lord, will we seek," will in nowise hide his face from you, nor put you away in anger." Psalm xxvii. 8, 9. By prayer you may prevail with God for his love; and being interested in that, nothing will be denied. That the efficacy of prayer may be evident, I shall imitate the apostle, speaking concerning faith, (Heb. xi.) and reckon up the wonders that have been the effects of prayer.

By prayer Abraham had saved Sodom, though the cry of their sins was so loud and great, if there had been ten righteous persons in it. By prayer he obtained a son from God, when his wife Sarah, was past child-bearing.

By prayer Jacob was delivered from the wrath of his brother Esau; Jonah, by prayer, out of the whale's belly; and the three children out of the seven times heated Babylonish furnace.

By prayer, David stayed the plague, so that it seized not on Jerusalem, and caused the sword of the destroying angel to be put into the sheath again.

By prayer Elias stayed the rain for three years and six months ; and by the same means opened the clouds of heaven, that the earth brought forth her fruit. By prayer he brought down fire, which consumed the two captains and their fifties that came to take him.

By prayer, Joshua commanded the sun, and it stood still in Gibeon, and the moon in the Valley of Aijalon ; for the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man, and fought for Israel.

By prayer, Daniel stopped the mouths of lions, and came untouched out of the den ; and by prayer, Peter and Paul and Silas were delivered out of prison ; shackles and iron gates being but weak things to the power of supplications.

And what shall I more say ? for time would fail me, as the apostle speaks, if I should tell of Samuel, of Samson, Jehoshaphat, and of the prophets and apostles, who by prayer procured thunder to destroy their enemies ; out of weakness were made strong ; turned to flight the mighty hosts of adversaries ; the dead they raised to life again ; made the lame from the womb to walk and leap ; healed diseases beyond the skill of art to cure.—

Behold prayer's efficacy, though performed by men of like passions with ourselves! this should persuade us to the love and practice of the duty.

3. Who is it that would hinder you from prayer!—Who stands at your right hand to resist you? Certainly it is an enemy, who is unwilling you should draw nigh to God, because he knows it is so good for you, Psalm lxxiii. Your own hearts also are ready to draw back, but this argues their egregious folly and desperate wickedness.

4. What has followed upon the omission of prayer?—Has not this omission ushered in sins of commission? Have you not, when you have neglected to cry for strength in your souls, found yourselves, like Reuben, unstable as water? Have you not easily been induced to do that which has filled the face of God with frowns, and the mouth of conscience with reproaches? On the other side, has not prayer been with success sometimes? have you not found encouragement and grace at the mercy-seat? Oh do that which both bitter and sweet experience prompts you to.

5. Prayer is an honourable employ-

ment.—In this duty you have admittance to the ear of the King of Heaven; how high is your company? your “fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ,” 1 John i. 3. Though the Lord be high, yet he hath respect unto the lowly; he will regard the prayer of the most destitute, and not despise it; he allows you a freedom to pour out your complaints, and to make known before him your troubles. And what honour is this, to have to do immediately with God, “to have him so nigh to you in all that you call upon him for?” Dent. iv. 7.

6. Frequency and fervency in prayer will be a great evidence of your regeneration and adoption. The child when born cries, and the sinner when born again prays. Of Paul it was said as soon as he was converted, “Behold he prayeth,” Acts ix. 11. It is the spirit of adoption that makes us cry, “Abba, Father.” If we cannot be satisfied unless we approach unto God, and value his favor and fellowship above all earthly things; and are chiefly desirous of those blessings which he never gives in wrath; and having given, never takes away again; we may conclude from our spiritual breath-

ing, our spiritual life. Now a good evidence of regeneration, what will it be worth in a day of trouble, in a dying hour?

The last use shall be of encouragement to believers.

1. Their prayers are God's delight — "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight," Prov. xv. 8. "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for thy voice is sweet, and thy countenance is comely," Cant. ii. 14. We are pleased with the talk and requests of our children, though their language be lisped and broken; and God is infinitely more indulgent than earthly parents are or can be, and much more willing to give good things than they, Matt. vii. 11.

2. There are many reasons why the God whom believers pray to, should answer them.

First. They are his chosen ones.—God pitched his love on them before the foundation of the world was laid.

Secondly. They are his Son's purchase.—He has bought them with a price, shed

his blood for the remission of their sins, and given his life for their ransom.

Thirdly. They are in covenant with God.—He has engaged to be their God, and surely he will be their guard also.

Fourthly. They are vessels of mercy, in whom he deigns to glorify his grace and love for ever.

Surely then he will heed these when they pray; he will give them the good they need, and save them from the evil which makes them fly to him for shelter. I have done with the first doctrine, 'That a Christian's security lies very much in *praying always*.'

ALL PRAYER.

All prayer is of concernment to be used —“praying always with all prayer,” says the text.—Prayer is a duty of very great extent, and the parts of it are admirably suited to the present state and condition of a Christian, and the divers kinds of prayer very well agree with the various circumstances wherein we are. All the ways of seeking God shall be to purpose,

if he be but sought diligently, and according as he himself has appointed ; for he tells us plainly, that " he says not to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain," Isa. xlv. 19.

Two things I shall here insist on. 1st, I shall speak concerning the parts of prayer, and show how all these parts are to be used. 2dly, I shall mention the several kinds of prayer, and endeavour so to persuade and direct you to each kind, that this duty may be performed in its utmost latitude.

I begin with the parts of prayer, and they are these :—

1. One part of prayer is an humble compellation, or naming of God.—Those titles that are given him in Scripture we must be acquainted with; and such should be used as are most suitable unto the matter of our prayers, and which have the greatest tendency to excite those gracious and spiritual affections which are required in our supplications. If we consult the prayers of saints, which are recorded in the Bible, we shall find that God is called sometimes " Lord," sometimes " Father," sometimes " the great and Mighty and Terrible God," sometimes " the King of

Glory," sometimes "the High and Lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy," sometimes "the God and Father of Christ," and likewise "the Father of Mercies, and God of all Comforts." It is not amiss to add unto God's title those attributes, the consideration whereof may help towards such a frame of spirit as becomes prayer.

Would we have our heart in a holy awe, and filled with reverence and godly fear? Mention then his omnipresence, greatness, his holiness, and jealousy. Would we have our hearts broken for sin? Mention his anger and hatred of iniquity; and withal his goodness, and forbearance, and readiness to be reconciled for "the riches of his goodness and long-suffering strongly lead unto repentance," Rom. ii. 4. Finally, would we in our requests have our desires enlarged, and our faith encouraged, and be also forward to praise? Mention then the freeness of God's love, the superabundance of his grace, as he is the Father of Jesus Christ. As of old he was styled, "the Lord that brought Israel out of Egypt," and afterwards, "the Lord that delivered Judah from the North country," namely, out of the Babylonish

captivity ; so likewise in the new Testament, he is called " the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," Eph. i. 3. ; 1 Pet. i. 3. ; 2 Cor. i. 3. Christ is the only prevailing advocate in prayer ; and his relation to God the ground of our hope and expectations.

2. A second part of prayer is, acknowledgement and confession of sin.—This confession God requires. " Only acknowledge thy iniquity," that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God. To confess sin has been the practice of the penitent. God has been honored when offending of him has been acknowledged most unreasonable and heinous ; and confession has had a great influence to the making of sinners humble and ashamed ; and upon it how quickly has forgiveness followed ! " When I kept silence," (that is, while I excused and extenuated my sin, and refused ingenuously to acknowledge it,) " my bones waxed old ; through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me ; my moisture was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my trans-

gressions unto the Lord ; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin," Psalm xxxii. 3—5.

This confession of sin in prayer should be particular ; general acknowledgments move but little ; the very root of sin must be dug unto, and bewailed. Paul cries out, he was a "blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," 1 Tim. i. 13. and laments "the law in his members," the body of death, that made him so forward unto evil, Rom. vii. David particularizes his uncleanness and blood-guiltiness, and traces these abominable streams unto the fountain whence they issued forth, the corruption of his nature. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," Ps. li. 5. Our despising the remedy which Christ offers in the gospel, should also be confessed with special sorrow ; for herein we go beyond the very devils, who never had one offer of pardon and grace made to them. And finally, as there is abundant cause, we should fall to "judging and condemning ourselves." One that is truly penitent is, as a certain author expresses it, "a faithful pleader for God against himself." We must unclasp the

book of conscience and spread it before the Lord, we must hold up our hands and cry, ' Guilty, guilty ! ' and say we can lay claim to nothing as our due, but severity and punishment.

3. A third part of prayer is deprecation, or praying against what we have deserved, and are afraid of.—We ought, with great solicitude, to pray against the anger and hatred of God. " He, even He, is to be feared: who can stand in his sight when once he is angry ? " Psalm lxxvi. 7. The anger of God expresses itself several ways: the lightest expression of it, namely, in temporal and outward calamities, are sometimes very terrible. Pestilence, famine, the sword of war, which devours flesh and drinks blood: how intolerable are they to look upon? But spiritual judgments are worse than these and argue hotter displeasure; when the Lord gives sinners up to blindness of mind, searedness of conscience, strong delusions, vile affections, hardness of heart; this shows he is extremely angry. The other may, but these judgments especially should be deprecated.

But the worst of all is to come in the other world, and that is the vengeance

of eternal fire! Oh how importunate should we be to be delivered from wrath to come! that we may not be sentenced to depart with a curse at the great day! that hell may not be our eternal home! How importunate should we be, that we may not in utter darkness be gnawed by the worm that never dies, that we may not dwell with devouring fire, nor inhabit everlasting burnings.

4. A fourth part of prayer is petition.—Here God gives us leave to be bold and large, and when we have asked never so much, he is ready to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask, or has entered into the heart of man to conceive. Pardon we should petition for, for we highly need it; and the Lord has said, “though we have made him to serve with our sins, and wearied him with our iniquities, yet he will blot out our transgressions for his own sake, and remember our sins no more,” Isa. xliii. 24, 25. Till a pardon be obtained, nothing else can be expected; but when once God in Christ is reconciled, and become a Father, nothing will be denied. His love, therefore, and the sense of it, should be entreated

with our whole heart. And since the Lord has promised to give both grace and glory, (Psalm lxxxiv. 11.) we may be bold to be petitioners for both. We should be earnest that grace and holiness may be wrought, in truth in our hearts, that grace may be continually increased, and that we may persevere, and be faithful to the very death; and, at length, attain that glory, honor, and immortality which is promised unto patient continuance in well-doing. Temporal blessings also we have leave to ask, for the Lord considers our frame, and every way is ready to encourage us unto our duty.

5. A fifth part of prayer is, intercession for others.—Not only those should be remembered by us, that stand in a near relation to us, but we should be concerned for the whole city, for the whole nation; nay, for the whole church of Christ militant upon earth. We should “prefer Jerusalem before our chief joy,” we should “not keep silence,” we should “give the Lord no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth,” Isa. lxii. 6, 7. We should in nowise hold our peace, “till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salva-

tion thereof as a lamp that burneth ;" that is, till the church is both reformed, and delivered from oppressing adversaries. In prayer we are to have regard to ourselves, to others, nay, to the Lord himself, and to Christ his Son. We are to beg that his name may be hallowed, from the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same ; that his kingdom may come ; and that all on earth may do his will, and submit unto the sceptre of his word.

6. Another part of prayer is imprecation.— Some are such, that we are to desire the Lord would fight against them. The evil angels, we may pray that the Lord will rebuke them, and pull down that kingdom of darkness under which the most of men are held in bondage. In reference to men, we must be much upon our guard against wishing them personal evil. David and the other prophets are not examples for us to follow in this matter ; for they knew by a prophetic spirit God's intentions concerning the persons that they prayed against. The general rule which we ought to follow, is this ; " But I say unto you, love your enemies ; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you ; pray for them that

despitefully use you, and persecute you," (Matt. v. 44. ;) this is to resemble God, "who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good." We are to beg rather the conversion than the confusion of our enemies ; and supposing they are implacable and incorrigible, we must desire rather that they may be hindered from doing harm by their designs and power, than that harm may come to them. Even when we pray against Anti-christ, whom we find devoted in Scripture to destruction, we must have no private grudge against the persons of any, but our eye must be fixed on Christ's honor, which Popery so much injures, and on the advancement of his kingdom in the world.

7. A seventh part of prayer is, thanksgiving.—The Lord's prayer ends with a doxology, or giving honor unto God: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever," Matt. vi. 13. To praise is to "speak with the tongues of angels." All the creatures that are visible, or mute, besides man ; 'he is the world's high-priest,' that should offer this sacrifice of praise for all ; 'he is the tongue of the creation,' which should be

sounding forth God's goodness towards all. How much does the Lord let forth unto us! And shall we deny him the revenue of praise? His mercies are without number, and his love without motive, and without measure: when praise is offered, he accounts himself glorified, Psal. l. 23. Therefore "in every thing we should give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us," 1 Thess. v. 18. Thus have I gone over the parts of prayer, and none of these parts are needless.

In the *second* place, I am to give you the several kinds of prayer. Prayer is two-fold; vocal, when the voice and heart are joined together; mental, when the heart only is engaged.

I shall speak first of vocal prayer, when tongue and heart go together in this duty.

There are several reasons why the tongue is to be made use of in prayer.

1. With our tongues we are to honor God; and when they are thus employed speaking to him, or of him, or for him, then they are our glory. As there are sins of the tongue, so duties of the tongue

too; and as the tongue of the swearer, blasphemer, filthy and foolish talker, is harsh and hateful to God, so the tongue of him that prays sincerely, is pleasant. Christ tells his spouse, that "her voice was sweet, and her countenance comely."

2. In praying with others, words are necessary. Some must be the mouth of the rest unto God.

3. Words, especially Scripture language, help to excite and stir up the affections, and they serve to keep the heart more intent upon the duty.

This vocal prayer is three-fold: *first*, prayer in the closet: *secondly*, prayer in the family: *thirdly*, prayer in the public congregation and assembly. Of all these I shall speak in order.

I. Prayer in the closet.—That secret prayer is the Lord's ordinance, is very evident: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret," Matt. vi. 6. And as our Lord gave this precept, so he is our example in regard of secret prayer: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed

into a solitary place, and there prayed," Mark i. 35. Jacob was left alone, and wrestled with God, and had the name of Israel given him, for as a prince he had power with God and prevailed, Gen. xxxii. 24. 28. Now if you would be fully informed what this wrestling was, compare the forecited place with Hosea xii. 3, 4. "By his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel," that is, the Angel of the covenant, "and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto him."

Now for the better managing of this sort of prayer, let these rules be observed diligently:

1. Study privacy, be as secret as possible, though we are not to be ashamed of any duty; and though our light is to shine before men, that they seeing our good works, may glorify our Father in heaven, yet a Christian is to do much out of the sight of others. As long as God's ear is open to the most whispering prayers, what need is there that any other ear should hear a word which we speak? When there is a desire that men should take notice of our prayers, God takes no notice of them, unless of the

hypocrisy in them, to abominate them ; therefore we have that caution from the Lord Jesus ; " And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward," Matt. vi. 5.

2. Take the fittest time for secret prayer. The morning especially is to be chosen, though once more in a day at least, it should be your ordinary practice to pour out your hearts in private before the Lord : " My voice shalt thou hear in the morning," says David, Psalm v. 3. " In the morning, O Lord, will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." If the soul be serious in its address unto God, in the beginning of the day, it is likely to have the more grace, and strength to resist temptations, and to walk with God all the day long. It is better to be shorter in the evening duties, and larger in the morning ; then the spirits are fresher and more abundant, and the soul has not such clogs in its actings, as it meets with when the body is spent and tired. But if something un-

avoidably fall out, that you cannot pray at the time you desire, and were wont, be sure lay hold of some other opportunity, and neglect not the duty altogether.

3. Let the word of God be looked into, and meditated on when prayer is made : The word will direct you, quicken and encourage you unto prayer. By the word, God speaks to you, as by prayer you speak to him ; if you regard not God's voice, how can you expect he should mind yours ? If you will not hear, and obey, he will not hear and grant what you request of him. " The word should dwell richly in you," Col. iii. 16.; your delight should be in the law of the Lord, and in that law should you meditate day and night. The Scriptures should be searched, which shows they are a depth, and all is not, at first looking into them, discovered : " You must seek here as for silver, and search here as for hid treasure, if you would understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." How enlightening, how enlivening, how cleansing, and transforming is the Word of God ! how sweet and desirable are the Lord's testimonies ! When the Spirit becomes the expositor of Scripture, and

opens the eyes too, to behold wondrous things out of God's law, and affects the heart, O then there is such efficacy, profit, and sweetness as is beyond comparison!

4. Be liberal in this duty of secret prayer. Pray with an enlarged, and with a free spirit; grudge not the time you spend here, for this is the best way of turning time unto a good account. Be sensible how good it is to draw nigh to God, for the promise is, If you draw nigh to God, he will draw nigh to you. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you; cleanse your hands, ye sinners; purify your hearts, ye double-minded," Jam. iv. 8. Now God's drawing near implies his being reconciled to us; his manifesting his power and grace for our help and supply. O therefore go unto God with a holy eagerness, who is so ready to meet you, and "to satiate the weary soul, and to replenish every sorrowful soul." We must be much and often with God, for this is the way to come to an acquaintance with him: and the better we are acquainted with him, the more we shall love him, and be sensible of his love to us. Listen to what is said, Job xxii. 21. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and

be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee."

5. In secret prayer, be very particular. Ease your consciences by a particular enumeration of your iniquities, and the aggravations which have heightened them. Make known all your wants, before that God, who has styled himself, "God All-sufficient;" fear not that the Lord will be weary of hearing, or be backward to give a gracious return. When you are alone with God, you may use the greater freedom of speech; this being particular, will contribute much unto your brokenness of heart, with which the Lord is well pleased, and also unto a sense of your manifold wants, and making of you meet to be supplied.

6. Look after secret prayer: Stand upon your watch-tower, and observe what answer is given. The merchant inquires after the ships that he sends to sea. When a petition is presented to a prince, you wait what answer will be returned. Be thus wise in prayer; if you speed not, find out the impediment; if you do speed, be encouraged to exercise faith in God, and to persist in prayer. "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore

will I call upon him as long as I live," says David, Psalm cxvi. 2. And let answers of prayer be matter of praise, that Satan and conscience may not accuse you of, and God may not be angry at, your ingratitude.

Thus of the rules concerning secret prayer. Now follow the arguments to persuade unto it.

1. Consider, God sees in secret.—In secret places God sees; for he fills both heaven and earth; his omnipresence is an evident demonstration of his omniscience. As he cannot be confined to any place, so neither can he be excluded. "All things are open and naked before him," Heb. iv. 13. And as his seeing in secret is matter of terror to the ungodly, so of joy unto the righteous. David speaks both with wonder and with gladness, (Psalm cxxxix. 7—10.) "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." In what secret

corner soever you are, God is with you ; all your sighs and groans, your complaints and desires are taken notice of.

2. Frequency in secret prayer is a great argument of uprightness and sincerity. It is a sign you seek God himself, when none but God knows of your seeking him. What the apostle speaks of the Jew, may be applied unto the Christian : He is not a Christian that is one outwardly, but he that is one inwardly ; not so much openly, as in secret. The praise of such is not of men but of God.

3. Secret prayer is a marvellous way to thrive in grace, and to grow rich towards God. By this means faith will grow exceedingly, love will abound, and our souls will prosper. Some tradesmen keep a shop and drive a trade there, and gain thereby ; but they have a secret way of trading, which is not observed, and by this they grow wealthy in a short space. A Christian that is much in secret with God, O how much does he gain ! How good does such an one find the Lord ! How ready both to forgive, and to give ! And he can set his seal unto that truth, that " God is plenteous in mercy unto them that call upon him," Psalm lxxxvi. 5.

4. Secret prayer is a means to fit for public ordinances.—They that are most upon their knees in the closet, will get most benefit in the sanctuary. The preparation of the heart is from God, and he must in secret be sought unto, to fit our spirits for solemn worship. Those that, before they come to hear, pray that the Gospel may come to them, not in word only, but in power also, and the Holy Ghost, and much assurance, these are likely to find the Gospel working effectually, and that it is the power of God to their salvation. Those that before they come to the table, examine themselves alone, beg that God would search them, and are importunate for strength against every corruption, for all the fruits of Christ's sufferings; for all the graces of the Spirit; are not likely to be sent away empty.

5. Secret prayer is a means to keep the impression of public duties upon the heart, after the duties themselves are ended. Your work is not over when public ordinances are over. Has any sin been discovered and reproved? You must go in secret, and bewail it, and cry out, 'Lord, let not this nor any iniquity have the do-

mission over me.' Has any duty been made manifest? you should go in secret and cry, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and make me to go in the path of thy commandments." Have any gracious and holy resolutions, by the motions of the Spirit with the word, been made? you must go alone and beg, 'Keep this, O Lord, for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of my heart, and establish my heart unto thee.'

6. Secret prayer is the way to have special tokens of God's love, and those joys that a stranger does not intermeddle with. Oh the sweet meltings and thawings of the heart for sin, as it is an abuse to mercy, that are experienced in secret prayer! Oh the visits that the great Physician of souls does then make! How suitably and gently does he deal with the wounded spirit! What assurance does he give, that he will in no wise cast out, but give rest unto the weary and heavy-laden! Oh what peace is spoken to the saints in answer to prayer! what sweet intimations are given, and sometimes what a rich and full persuasion of their interest in that love, which is unchangeable and everlasting! Surely "the se-

cret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant."

7. Consider, God will reward openly. This argument Christ uses (Matt. vi. 6.) to enforce secret prayer: "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." As all secret wickedness shall at last be detected and punished, so all secret piety and godliness shall be made manifest before the whole world at the judgment day, and the reward will be exceeding great and everlasting.

So much, then, concerning prayer in the closet.

II. Prayer in the family is to be insisted on. And that family prayer is a duty, may be evidently proved by these arguments.

1. The apostle in the text enjoins all prayer, and family prayer is one kind that holy men have used. Joshua resolves, that he and his house would serve the Lord; and prayer is so principal a part of divine service, that in Scripture it is sometimes put for the whole. "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord;" that is, in a more public manner to worship him. So of Cornelius it is said, "that he feared God with all his

house, and prayed unto the Lord always," Acts x. 2.

2. Parents are called to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to teach them in the way wherein they ought to go, and to be a pattern to them of the discharge of every Christian duty. But how can they more effectually furnish them with such an example, than by bowing their knees along with them before the throne of grace, and imploring in their presence the best of blessings upon them? Few things are more calculated to impress the minds of children and of servants, than hearing these prayers of the head of the family; and where they are seconded by a consistent example, a signal blessing has often accompanied them.

3. The family stands in need of blessings, which they are to beg for together, and to deprecate family evils. And for encouragement Christ has promised that where "two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them." Now, in family duties two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, and his presence may, without presumption, be expected.

4. Wrath is threatened upon prayerless families. "Pour out thy fury upon the families that call not upon thy name," Jer. x. 25. I grant indeed that the word families is of such a latitude, that it extends unto countries and kingdoms; but if there be an obligation upon countries and kingdoms to join in calling upon God, surely then families more strictly taken, are in nowise exempted.

Having proved family prayer a duty, I shall lay down some directions as to the performance of it.

1. Be sensible that prayer is a business of greater concernment than any worldly business whatsoever. You are indeed to be diligent to your callings that are particular; but your general callings are of greatest weight. The general calling is that which all are called to: and what are all called to? They are called to serve and glorify God, and to work out their own salvation. Prayer is a part of your homage to the King of heaven. Much spiritual and eternal benefit is to be obtained by it, therefore do it not as a by-business, neither let every small matter cause the omission of it.

2. Believe that success in your callings depends upon the Lord's blessing. "The blessing of the Lord maketh rich," says Solomon, "and he addeth no sorrow with it," Prov. x. 22. With this it is in vain to rise up early, and to sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness. Now prayer for this blessing is the way to fetch it. I grant indeed that many thrive in the world without prayer; but then wealth is a curse and a snare to them; it is a weight that hinders them from ascending into the hill of the Lord, and helps to sink them into destruction and perdition.

3. Let prayer be ordinarily twice a-day, as under the old law there was a morning and evening sacrifice; and let the whole family join in it if it be possible, since there are none but need prayer, and may receive advantage by it.

4. Let the Word of God be read when prayer is made, that not only you, but your households after you, may be acquainted with the mysteries of the gospel, and with the will of God. Abraham communicated what he had learned from the Lord unto his family; he used his authority, "and commanded his children,

and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord," Gen. xviii. 19.

5. Take heed of customariness, and formality in family worship; engage always with a serious spirit, and in every duty stir up yourselves to take hold on God.

I conclude with the motives to persuade you to family prayer.

1. You that are governors have a charge of the souls that dwell under your roof, and must answer for them. Therefore you are to pray with them, to pray for them; else you will incur the guilt of the blood of souls, and that will lie heavy. You provide food for your households, for you are unwilling it should be said, you are so much worse than infidels, as to suffer any to starve that dwell with you. Oh what unmercifulness is it patiently to suffer those of your household to go on in the way that leads to damnation; and not to call upon the Lord, in their hearing, that they may be saved!

2. Families are the seminaries both of church and state; and therefore as you desire the church may be pure, and the state righteous, look well unto your fam-

ilies; and let religion flourish in them. Reformation indeed must begin at persons; and if every one would mend one, all would be reformed. But from persons it must proceed to houses: And if these were once leavened with godliness, what holy cities, and what an happy nation would there be!

3. Consider, family worship has been woefully neglected of late in these declining times. How many large consciences, loose principles, and loose practices, are there to be found among us! We match Laodicea in lukewarmness; and what was said of languishing Sardis, may be applied to us, that we have "a name to live, but are dead." In many families all are dead as a stone, and there is a most impious and gross neglect of God and duty; and in other families all are ready to die; lively services are rarely to be found. O it is high time to awake, and vigorously to endeavor, that in our houses the Lord may be served by all, and that with all their heart, and all their soul, and all their mind, and all their strength.

Thus much on the subject of family prayer.

III. Prayer in the public congregation and assembly is to be spoken of. God's temple of old was styled the "house of prayer," because there his people met together to seek his face. Public prayer is a great ordinance, and when rightly managed, of great efficacy.

Now the rules concerning public prayer are these.

1. These prayers must be performed in a known tongue, that all may understand and be edified, (1 Cor. xiv.) ; and they should be well expressed ; nothing that is crude, unseemly, or that borders upon nonsense or impropriety, should be brought forth in the assembly.

2. Come at the very beginning. To come late, is both offensive to God, and to serious spirits ; and it is to cheat and defraud your own souls. And when you are there, let your gesture be reverend ; for God expects worship and adoration from your whole man ; internal from the soul, and external from the body.

3. Take heed of distraction, when there are so many objects to divert you, and your hearts are so exceeding slippery. Remember God's jealous eye is fixed upon you ; and as he cannot be deceived, so

he cannot endure to be mocked by you, Gal. vi. 6.

4. Take heed of carnal designs in your public duties. Let not your supplications be like those of the Pharisees and Scribes, of whom Christ says, they made "prayers only for a pretence and show," Luke xx. 47. The hypocrites are like the birds of prey, which though they soar never so high towards heaven, yet their eye is still downward, that they may catch something. Be not seemingly devout in the congregation, that you may the more unsuspectedly be unjust in your shops, and secretly intemperate and unclean. But be very sincere in your public addresses unto God ; as knowing you have to do with him that sees not as man sees, that judges not according to outward appearance, but tries the heart and reins.

And, to persuade you to this public prayer, consider,

1. God is hereby acknowledged and honored. His people hereby testify to the world, that there is a Lord in heaven, whom they worship, and from whom they have their expectation. And indeed this is one reason of public institutions, that

we may make a profession to the world whose we are and whom we serve.

2. The Lord vouchsafes something to his people in the sanctuary, that elsewhere is not to be found. David was in an admirable frame when he was in the wilderness of Judah: God was liberal to him both of grace and comfort; but he was not satisfied, because deprived of the public ordinances that were administered in the tabernacle; therefore he cries out, "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, to see thy power and thy glory so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary," Psalm lxxiii. 1, 2.

3. The united prayers of many saints together, are stronger, and more apt to prevail. Much fire together gives the greater heat, and many waters joined, run with more violence; and in like manner, when a great congregation joins together as one man to wrestle with God in prayer, how successful are they likely to be! Abraham alone had like to have prevailed for Sodom; but suppose there had been an assembly of righteous ones belonging to Sodom that had joined with Abraham in prayer, surely the city had been spared

I have despatched vocal prayer, which I divided into three kinds, secret, family, and public.

In the *second* place, I come to speak of mental prayer, when the heart alone without the tongue is engaged. Now this mental prayer is two-fold: First, more solemn; and secondly, more sudden and ejaculatory. It is lawful and possible to pray alone with the heart in a more solemn manner, and truly in some places and in some circumstances, words may not be so convenient to be uttered; but where it is convenient words should be used, because it is difficult to pray any while only in the heart, and do it without roving.

But mental prayer, that is more sudden and ejaculatory, I shall a little dilate upon. In this kind of prayer, the soul lifts up itself to God, in some short desire or request. Thus "Moses cried unto God," Exod. xiv. 15. and yet we read not of a word uttered. Thus Nehemiah prayed, when king Artaxerxes was speaking to him; Neh. ii. 4. These holy ejaculations are the very breathings of the new creature; they mightily help to keep down the lustings of the flesh, and to preserve

us unspotted by the world, or the unclean god of it; but the heart hereby is kept close to the God of heaven.

Concerning this mental ejaculatory prayer, let these directions be observed.

1. Let the heart frequently be sending up desires to God. All true desires are observed, are pleasing to him, and shall be satisfied; let these desires therefore be strong, and principally after the greatest, that is to say, spiritual blessings.

2. In all your civil employments, let your hearts ever and anon be thus engaged; this will make and keep you spiritual; it will hinder your estrangement from God, and your being ensnared by the unrighteous mammon.

3. Let every temptation at the very first be resisted by this kind of prayer: thus, "watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," Matt. xxvi. 41. O sigh and groan to the God of all grace, when you find Satan assaulting, and a sinful and deceitful heart ready to yield, that you may have "grace to help in time of need," Heb. iv.

4. Let this prayer begin and end every duty; sigh before for assistance, and sigh afterwards for acceptance, and that infirmities, through Christ Jesus, may be

passed by; and that you may obtain some spiritual advantage by every ordinance.

5. Begin and end every day with mental prayer. As soon as ever you awake, there are many watching for your first thoughts; Satan, and sin, and the world will have them, if your souls are not lifted up to the Lord. Let him be last likewise in your thoughts; this is the way to lie down in peace and safety, Psalm iv.

6. Especially upon the Sabbath-day, ejaculatory prayer should be abundant; you must not then think your own thoughts, nor find your own pleasures. Holy desires should issue forth continually. Sabbaths would be gainful seasons indeed, were they but thus improved.

7. Mix mental prayer and praise together. Let your souls, and all that is within you, bless the Lord upon any manifestation of his goodness, while you desire blessings from him.

And thus have I gone over the parts and kinds of prayer. Much work indeed I have told you of, but the more work the better; for the more grace is to be expected in order unto the performing of

what is required. I shall conclude with a very brief application in two words.

1. How sharply are they to be reprov-
ed, and how melancholy is their condi-
tion, who, instead of praying with all
prayer, use no prayer, but live in the
total neglect of this duty?

2. Let the disciples of Christ be per-
suaded to pray with all prayer. All
prayer that God has appointed, he is
ready to hear. In all prayer the name of
Christ must be used, as it is only for his
sake we can expect acceptance ; and the
promises of God, which are sure, exceed-
ing great and precious, may be pleaded ;
and how glad may we be that the Lord
has appointed so many successful ways of
seeking him, wherein he has consulted
the variety of our conditions and neces-
sities ! So much for the second doc-
trine.

SUPPLICATION IN THE SPIRIT.

Prayer when rightly performed, is sup-
plication in the Spirit. Indeed, all our
worship of God, who is a spirit, " must

be in spirit and in truth," else it is in fact no-worship. As the body without the spirit is dead, so duties without spirit are dead also.

In the handling of this point, I shall, *first*, open to you, What it is to pray in the spirit: *secondly*, Lay down the reasons of the doctrine: *thirdly*, Answer some cases of conscience about praying in the spirit: *Lastly*, Make application.

First, What it is to pray in the spirit. This, as I have already intimated, refers both to the spirit of him that prays, and also to the Spirit of God, who helps to pray.

(1.) This praying in the spirit refers unto the spirit of him that prays, and several things are here included.

1. To pray with our spirit, implies, to pray with understanding. "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also," 1 Cor. xiv. 15. We must not only understand the words that are spoken, but also, and that principally, the worth of those things which we petition for; we must likewise in some measure be acquainted with the all-sufficiency and faithfulness of that God whom we pray to, and with our own indigency that

are the petitioners. The Athenians had an altar dedicated "to the unknown God;" and they are said "ignorantly to worship him;" and truly all their worship degenerated into superstition. We must know the Lord and ourselves, what his promises and our own needs are, else prayer will be of no account.

2. To pray with our spirit, implies to pray with judgment, discerning between things that differ. There is as vast a difference between sin and holiness, as there is between deformity and beauty: There is as vast a difference between the creature and the Creator, as there is between the "broken cisterns that can hold no water," and "the fountain of living waters." "Be astonished, O ye heavens at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, (saith the Lord,) for my people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me, the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." There is as vast a difference between a state of grace and a state of wrath, as there is between heaven and hell. Now he that prays, must be apprehensive of all this; and a believing apprehension of it, will make him earnest for the loving kindness

of the Lord, and that he may taste more and more of the Fountain of living waters, and be cleansed from all defilements.

3. To pray with our spirits implies, to pray with intention of mind. Abraham drove away the fowls that did light upon his sacrifice; and so should we drive away the impertinent, and sinful, and troublesome thoughts that arise, or are injected into our hearts, when we engage in prayer. Our hearts cannot wander in the least, but they are espied by him, whose 'name is jealous.' We should therefore desire that the Lord himself, who holds the wind in his hand, would seize upon our more unruly hearts, and keep them close to himself in duty, especially considering there are some kinds of distractions that nullify and make void prayer; distractions that are not regarded, not lamented, not watched, or striven against.

4. To pray with our spirits, implies, to pray with spiritual affections. The affections are the wings of the soul; and the soul is carried either to or from any thing, according as the affections are inclined. The apostle, exhorting to seek

the things that are above, presently adds, "Set your affection on things above," Col. iii. 1. 2., intimating, we shall never seek the things above in good earnest, unless our affections be placed on them. Those affections that have evil for their object, must spend their strength upon sin, which is the worst of all evils. Sin must be hated most perfectly; sin must cause the deepest sorrow; sin must be most feared; and against sin the heart should rise with the greatest indignation. Those affections that have good for their object, as love, desire, and the like, should run with a full stream towards God, and those great things that are brought to light by the gospel, and promised in the covenant of grace. The stronger and more spiritual our affections are in prayer, the better success will follow: It is said of Judah, (2 Chron. xv. 15.) that they "sought the Lord with their whole desire, and he was found of them."

(2) This praying in the Spirit, refers to the Spirit of God who helps to pray. The Apostle Jude exhorts to build up ourselves on our most holy faith, and to pray "in the Holy Ghost," Jude 20.;

and so to keep ourselves in the love of God ; looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Now the operation, or working of the Spirit of God in prayer, I shall explain in these particulars.

1. The Spirit of God teaches believers what to pray for ; he opens their eyes to understand the Word, and to know what the will of the Lord is. "We know not," (says the apostle) "what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God," Rom. viii. 27.

2. The Spirit removes impediments to prayer ; he turns that love, that naturally is in the heart to sin, into hatred ; he causes the world that was idolized to be contemned ; he cures that infidelity, in reference to the excellency of spiritual things, that the unrenewed soul is full of ; as also that enmity against God and holiness, which was in the mind all the while it was carnal. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. ; the fetters are knocked off, the clogs removed, the soul is brought out of prison, and is made free, both unto the perform-

ance of duty, and free in the performance of it.

3. The Spirit encourages unto prayer ; he lets believers understand, that " now is the accepted time, that now is the day of salvation." Wherefore, he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in a day of salvation have I succoured thee ; behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 2. Though the Lord should have been sought much sooner, yet it is not too late to seek him now ; he will be found by the hearty seeker ; such seeking shall not be in vain : " But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." Deut. iv. 29.

4. The Spirit enables believers to exercise those graces that are required in prayer. There are four graces especially that should be exercised, Humility, Faith, Love, Patience.

1. Humility. The Lord has a special regard to the humble ; whereas the proud he knows afar off, and has threatened to resist the proud. The humble soul has high and awful apprehensions of God in

prayer, and mean, very mean thoughts of itself. Abraham was humble when he said, "Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes." Job was humble when he said, "Mine eyes seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself." The good angels themselves are humble, though never in the least offenders. The cherubim "cover their faces with their wings, and cry out, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is filled with his glory." How vile then should we be in our own eyes who by our guilt are so obnoxious; who have so many foul spots and stains upon our souls, which are the effects of sin, nay, whose very "righteousnesses are but as filthy rags?" Isa. lxiv. 6.

2. Faith is to be exercised in prayer; and truly we may come with confidence to the throne of grace, if we consider the power of God, which is not only most mighty, but almighty. "I am God Almighty," saith the Lord to Abraham, the father of the faithful. He can do more for us than we can desire should be done for us. Nothing is too hard for him; and although all other helps fail, he needs them not: his arm, when alone, can

bring salvation. This power of God may safely be relied on, for he is also full of mercy. "God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God, also unto thee belongeth mercy." Psalm lxii. David was encouraged by this in his supplications, Psalm xxv. 6. "Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindnesses, for they have been ever of old." And we have not only an intimation of God's merciful nature, but in his covenant, he has promised to show mercy, for this he delights in; and Christ is the Mediator of this covenant, so that is most sure. Hear the apostle, Heb. viii. 10. 12. "This is the covenant that I will make, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins, and iniquities will I remember no more."

3. Love is to be exercised in prayer. There must be a love to our neighbor, and they must from the heart be forgiven, who have trespassed against us. Shall we think much of a few pence, when we are debtors many thousand talents? But

principally, there must be love to the Lord expressed in prayer; his favor, and fellowship with him must be longed for; the soul must thirst for God, for the living God, as the chased hart after the water-brooke. And when he does manifest himself, he must be rejoiced and delighted in, and his grace admired, whatever is received.

4. Patience is also to be exercised in prayer. There must be a patient waiting in this duty, a right understanding of God's wisdom and faithfulness; that he knows what, and when to give, and will do it in the best time and measure, will be a great means to cure our over-hastiness. David is to be imitated, who said, "I waited patiently for the Lord," and he lost nothing by it; for it follows, "He inclined his ear unto me, and heard my cry." These are the graces which the Spirit enables believers to exercise in prayer.

5. The Spirit directs believers unto Christ, as the alone prevailing advocate. We are said to have access to the Father, by the Spirit, and through the Son, Eph. ii. 18. The Spirit leads us to Christ as the Mediator, who is the way unto God.

The Spirit shows, that God having given Christ, has opened, through him, the treasures of his grace, and for his sake will give freely all things. The Spirit still is turning the eye of the believer towards the Lord Jesus, and in prayer instructs us how to improve his relation to us, who is bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, and is become a head and husband to us; how to improve his sufferings, by which all that we need has been procured; how to improve his intercession, which, as it is incessant, so it is never denied; and, finally, how to improve his power and authority, for he can do what he will, both in heaven and in earth. He is the Prince of Peace, and the Lord of life and glory: he can give peace, and life, and glory to whom he pleaseth.

6. The Spirit makes believers sincere in their aims when they pray. They design the hallowing and honoring of God's name, as well as their own welfare. They beg for pardon and grace, not only because it is good for themselves to have these, but likewise, because the Lord glorifies his grace, and mercy, and goodness, in forgiving, and healing, and saving those that cry to him.

Thus you see what it is to pray in the spirit ; and consequently it does not lie barely, either in fluency of utterance, or in variety of expressions, or in multitude of words.

Now follow the reasons of the doctrine, and they are of two sorts : First, Why our own spirits should engage in prayer.

1. Because God is a Spirit. Our Lord assigns this as a reason why worship should be in spirit, because God is a Spirit, who is worshipped.

2. He principally requires our spirit. " My son, give me thine heart," Prov. xxiii. 26. And truly he does narrowly observe where our hearts are, when we are at prayer ; and no wonder, for our spirits are most capable of serving him. To admire, fear, love, trust in him, these are the principal ways of worshipping him, and this is done with the heart.

3. Without our spirits, prayer is but a mockery. If the Lord is honored with the mouth, and the heart be far from him, God says, " In vain do they worship me, and I will not hold them guiltless." And this you may observe, that when our hearts are not engaged in prayer, they

are commanded by the Lord's enemies : Sin, the world, and Satan, do detain them.

The second sort of reasons are, Why we must pray by the help of the Spirit of God. His assistance is necessary.

1. Because of our darkness. We of ourselves know not God, nor his will, nor our own greatest needs, nor wherein lies our great interest and truest happiness.

2. Because of our deadness. Active we are as to sin, but unto prayer indisposed. The dead man must be lifted and carried, for of himself he cannot stir. We that naturally are without strength, nay, without life, cannot lift up our souls to God, unless the Spirit lift them up to him.

3. Because of the opposition that is made by the evil one. When we come to the mercy-seat, the devil makes nothing of taking the right hand of us ; he is ready to resist us, as he did Joshua the high-priest, Zec. iii. 1. ; and we are not able to withstand him, unless the Spirit of God, who is infinitely stronger, rebuke him for us.

4. The Spirit's assistance is necessary in prayer, because of that natural averseness in our own hearts unto what is good.

Whereas we should hate the evil, and love the good ; we hate the good, and love the evil ; nay, in the very best, there is a law in the members, which wars against the law of the mind, and evil is present. If the Spirit were not also mightily and graciously present, there would be an utter inability as to prayer, or any duty which God requires.

In the third place, I am to answer some cases of conscience concerning the spirit of prayer.

1. Whether all believers have the spirit of prayer?

I answer, that all true believers have this spirit ; for the spirit of grace, which all saints have received, is also a spirit of supplication, Zech. xii. 10. ; and the apostle expressly says, " if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

2. Whether only believers have the spirit of prayer?

I answer, The spirit of prayer is peculiar to believers ; for where the Holy Ghost does help the heart to pray, he cleanses the heart from what before defiled it, and turns the heart and the desires of it towards God ; so that this is now its language, " Whom have I in heaven

but thee? and there is none on earth I desire besides thee," Psalm lxxiii. 25.

3. Whether the spirit of prayer may not be lost?

I answer, That the Spirit may be grieved by our corruptions when they prevail; and when they grow slothful and heedless how we enter into temptation; and being grieved, may withdraw his quickening and assisting influences. But the Spirit is never quite lost by those that have been truly renewed by him. He "abides forever" where he has consecrated any to be his temple, John xiv. 16. David after his fall, says, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation," to show that his joy was lost; but he prays, "take not thy holy Spirit from me," to signify that the Spirit was not quite departed, though that departure was deserved and feared.

4. May not persons excel in the gift of prayer, that yet are void of the spirit?

I answer in the affirmative. The gift of prayer may only serve to puff up professors with pride. How are such pleased in reflecting upon the repute they have gained by their enlargedness in expression! And this pride is not checked, is not abhorred. The words of prayer may be

used, and a carnal, worldly design carried on. Hypocrites aim at an eminency in gifts, that they may pass for godly; and under the cloak of religion, cover their wickedness; and in their most enlarged supplications they aim at their own profit or fame; and are prodigiously destitute of the fear of God. It is certain the gift of prayer may be in the unsound hearted; for even the gift of prophecy, which the apostle prefers before other gifts, we find in wicked men. "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity," Matt. vii. 22, 23

5. May not some that have the spirit of prayer be very weak in the gift of utterance? I answer, yes: There was much of the spirit of prayer in Hezekiah, when he "chattered like a crane or swallow, and mourned like a dove." Isa. xxxviii. 14. The Lord regards not so much the expression as affection; and the heart may be sincere in its desires, when, not only because of the strength of those desires, but also through confusion, there wants utterance. Let not these there-

fore that are but weak in expression be discouraged; for the heart may highly value mercy and grace, and obtain both when prayer is but lisped, and stammered forth by the tongue. Now follows the application.

Use 1. Of reproof, which belongs,

1. To those who pray in form, but whose heart and spirit pray not with them. They put the Lord off with the bended knees, the stretched-forth hands, the lifted-up eyes, the labor of the lips, the fruit of their invention; but all this while their hearts are not with him, and their affections run astray after their vanities and iniquities. The prayers of such dissemblers are dead prayers, and truly are to be numbered among their dead works; and their prayers not being minded by themselves, how should God have regard to them, unless it be to hate and punish them?

2. They are to be reprov'd, who make light of the Spirit of God, and of his assistance in this duty of prayer. They account the aid of the Holy Ghost, a needless, a notional, and imaginary thing. Such never knew what it is to wrestle with God, what it is to sigh and groan,

and be, as it were, in travail, till the blessings begged for are obtained. O how impossible is it that nature should rise thus high, till the Spirit do renew and elevate it!

Use 2. Of trial, whether we have the spirit of prayer or not? And this may be discerned by these following signs.

1. Those that have the spirit of prayer, by the Spirit have been convinced of sin; John xvi. 8. He has discovered sin, broken their hearts for it, and it is now become a load to them, though, before, they loved it never so extremely. Before they hid sin, now they lay it open in prayer; before they excused it, now they aggravate it, and judge themselves worthy of hell and wrath, because of it.

2. Those that have the spirit of prayer, are made to look unto Christ crucified. "I will pour out upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of supplication: Then shall they look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him, and be in bitterness as one is in bitterness for the loss of a first-born," Zech. xii. 10. Christ crucified is looked upon by such with a weeping eye, because their sin was the

cause of his sufferings ; and with an eye of dependence, for all their expectation of grace, and peace, and life, is through him alone.

3. They that have the spirit of prayer, are earnest for the fruits and graces of the spirit ; that love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, all which the apostle enumerates, Gal. v. 22, 23. may be in them and abound ; and they are restless in prayer for the mortification of the deeds of the flesh, for they consider what is said, Rom. viii. 13, " if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live."

4. They that have the spirit of prayer, are enabled to go unto God as unto a father. " And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father," Gal. iv. 6. Not but that doubts and fears may be in those that have the spirit ; witness the Psalmist, who cried out, " Will the Lord cast off for ever ; and will he be favorable no more ? Is his mercy clean gone for ever ; doth his promise fail for evermore ? Hath God forgotten to be

gracious ; hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies ?" Psalm lxxvii. 7—9. But at length, and truly it may be long before, faith gets the better of unbelief. Many that are the children of God cannot always call him Father ; yet even then they go to him, and are not quite beat off from him ; and there is a secret trust, that he has some gracious respect to them ; and by this they are encouraged still to persist in prayer.

Use 3. Of exhortation. Prize and value the spirit of prayer. As without his help you cannot pray to any purpose ; so he can make prayer mightily prevailing. The Spirit will create an holy boldness in your access to the throne of grace ; he will enlarge your hearts in this duty ; which enlargements are not without sweetness and great satisfaction. The Spirit will draw up and indite such petitions for you, as will not be denied, and give some encouraging intimation of your being accepted, and answered in the Beloved

Now, if you would have the spirit of prayer, follow these directions.

1. Rest not in the bare gift of prayer ; let it not satisfy you that you have a

praying tongue, and no more : All your supplications are but a flattering the Lord with your lips, and a lying unto him with your tongues, while your hearts are not right with him.

2. Be sensible of your need of the Spirit. Light and liberty, life and liveliness, are the effects of the Spirit ; good motions, holy affection-, are his offspring. 'Without him, you will be like Pharaoh's chariots when the wheels were taken off, and drive on heavily ; but he can make your souls like the chariots of Amminadab.

3. Part with every thing that grieves the Spirit. Foster not any lust or inordinate affection, that may render your hearts an unpleasant habitation to him.

4. Frequently beg for the Spirit, and especially in secret. This will be a sign that you indeed desire him. Plead the promises which you find, Luke xi. 13. " If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask him ? " And what God has promised, Christ died that he might purchase ; nay, Christ has prayed that the Spirit might

be bestowed ; and therefore you may pray with the greater encouragement and assurance. Thus concerning the third doctrine.

WATCH IN PRAYER.

In prayer, watching is a necessary ingredient. Watching is a duty which the great Prophet Christ himself frequently pressed ; and the injunction is general, " What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch," Mark xiii. 37. He knew that a spiritual lethargy is a disease most incident. But if at any time, surely in holy duties this heedlessness and sleepiness, does discover itself ; we had need therefore to rouse up our spirits, that are so sluggish naturally. Deborah speaks to herself four times : " Awake, awake ; Deborah awake. awake ; utter a song ;" Judges v. 12. We have need thus again and again to call upon our souls to awake and be watchful, when about to utter a prayer. Watching and prayer are joined in Scripture : and not only so, but watching is required in prayer ; Col. iv. 2.

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." So 1 Pet. iv. 7. "But the end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

In the handling of this doctrine, I shall, 1st, show what we are to watch against in prayer. 2dly, What we are to watch over. 3dly, What we are to watch for. 4thly, What manner of watching is required in prayer. 5thly, Give the reason why watching is so necessary. Lastly, make application.

In the *first* place, I am to tell you, what we are to watch against in prayer.

1. We must watch against indwelling corruption. There is a law in our members that wars against the law of our minds; and the law in our members commands quite contrary to the law of God. This law says, pray not at all; but espocially forbids seriousness and fervency in prayer; and if not watchful, this law will sway and over-rule us, and bring us into captivity to the law of sin. We had need look to ourselves, for when we have thought of doing good, "evil will be present with us." And if care be not taken, the evil will hinder our doing

of the good. O how deep is the corruption of our nature! How desperately wicked is the heart of man! How great are the remainders of sin, in those that are most renewed! And since the remaining flesh still does lust against the Spirit, this flesh is to be narrowly eyed, that it may be weakened and checked, else it will spoil all our services.

2. When praying, we must watch against the evil one. Satan likes not to see us at the throne of grace, because he knows and has felt the sufficiency of that grace, that believers obtain there. "I besought the Lord," says the apostle, "when buffeted by the messenger of Satan," 2 Cor. xii. 8.; and the power of Christ so rested upon him, that Satan had no power, unless it were full sore against his will, to keep him humble, and to hinder his being exalted above measure. The devil therefore, with might and main, withstands us in prayer; and how many are his wiles, that he may keep us off from this most advantageous duty! Sometimes he objects the difficulty of prayer; sometimes he says, it is needless to spend so much time therein; sometimes, it is fruitless, and that little comes of all our cries and tears; some-

times he proposes other business to be done, that we may be diverted from engaging with that fervor and devotedness we ought to feel in this duty. How busy our adversary the devil is, we should be acquainted with, and watch against his wiles; and do our duty without crediting or regarding his instigations.

3. When praying, we must watch against the cares of this world. Our Lord cautions against over-solicitousness about "what we shall eat, what we shall drink, wherewithal we shall be clothed;" as that which would hinder us from seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, Matt. vi. 32, 33. Earthly care will allow but little or no time to prayer, and does very much distract the heart in that duty. Worldly projects make bold to come into the thoughts; and secular business and employments are minded, even then when the Lord seems to be worshipped. Surely it is our wisdom to take heed to the apostle, Phil. iv. 6. "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Prayer is an antidote against this care, as this care is an impediment unto prayer.

4. When praying, we must watch against the pleasures of this life. There is a strange proneness to those pleasures wherewith the senses are gratified, to bewitch the heart ; and if these are loved and admired, prayer will be irksome and unpleasant, and we shall easily be drawn wholly to neglect that which we do not at all like. She that continued in prayer and supplication was not one that lived in pleasure, 1 Tim. v. 5, 6. Watch against pleasures, which are but for a season, and when ended, torments follow that will never end. We read of that rich man in the gospel, that was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously and deliciously every day ; we read, I say, that he feasted, but not that he prayed, till he was in the place of torment. Pleasure before hindered prayer ; torment forced him to pray ; but, alas ! it was then too late. Despise sensual pleasures, and when they are presented to entice thee, scorn them. In the Lord, and in prayer, infinitely truer and more solid delight is to be found.

5. When praying, we must watch against deceitful riches. Christ says we cannot serve God and mammon. If the

love of money be the root of evil, as the apostle affirms, then it must needs be an hindrance to duty. Moses had low thoughts of the treasures of Egypt; nay, looked upon the very reproach of Christ as greater riches. Heb. xi. If any are deceived by such treasure, and grow eager after it, it will certainly hinder them from seeking him that is invisible, especially from *diligently* seeking him. One great reason why many pray so seldom and so coldly, is worldly-mindedness; they are altogether for growing rich in the world, so their desires are small of growing rich towards God. Luther was a man much and mighty in prayer; he spent three hours a-day constantly herein; but he was also eminent for his contempt of riches. And therefore, when one said, Why don't you stop Luther's mouth against the pope, by some preferment? it was answered, That German beast—he should have said, that German saint—does not care for silver.

6. When praying, we must watch against the sins that do most easily beset us. The sin of our constitution, the sin of our calling, the sin which has naturally the greatest interest in our

love, is the arch-rebel against God, and our chief enemy ; and upon the least unwatchfulness, this sin will prevail ; and upon its prevailing, backwardness to prayer, and deadness in it, will be the consequence. But not only the sin that doth so easily beset us, but every weight must be laid aside, if we would, with freedom, converse with God in prayer. Every iniquity allowed of, defiles the soul, and separates between the Lord and us, and unfits for communion with him ; therefore we must watch and strive against all sin without exception.

In the *second* place, I am to inform you, what in prayer we are to watch over.

1. In prayer we are to watch over our thoughts. It is a proverb, but none of Solomon's, nor a wise one, that ' thoughts are free.' God sees the thoughts, and the wicked must forsake not his way only, but " his thoughts, if he will return to the Lord, and partake of mercy," Isa. lv. 7. If thoughts are not watched over, there may be " so many thoughts so many sins," and guilt thereby vastly increased. Thoughts are very quick and fleet things, and great is the natural vanity,

impertinence, and confusedness and sinfulness of them. If there be no eye to them, nay, if the eye be not very careful, prayer may be made and God prayed to, and not thought on all the while. Right prayer in hard labor, and the labor lies very much about the thoughts, in fixing them upon God, in keeping our vain imaginations, and expelling them as soon as notice is taken of their intrusion.

2. In prayer, we are to watch over our reasoning faculty.—There are certain reasonings which the apostle calls “high things, that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God,” which must be brought into captivity, 2 Cor. x. 5. We must not be peremptory in arguing and determining that this, and that, and the other thing is good for us, but refer ourselves to his wisdom and good pleasure, who does all things for his people both well and wisely. And as we must not lean to our own understandings, in judging what temporal mercies are most convenient; so neither are we to grow so bold and presumptuous as to reason against any of the attributes or promises of God, nor any part of his will which he has revealed.

The Lord has proclaimed himself gracious to his people, terrible to his enemies; we must pray on and believe this, though enemies are high, and his church never so much oppressed. Though providences do seem never so much to thwart God's promises, yet we must believe that God is faithful in his promises, and pray, and wait for their accomplishment. Finally, we must not reason against any part of his will; but though his commands are never so strictly holy, we must approve of them, and beg grace to keep them.

3. In prayer we are to watch over our hearts.—“Keep thy heart with all diligence,” Prov. iv. 23. Heed must be taken that there be no jarring between our wills and the will of God; for his will is holy, just, and good; ours therefore should always comply with his. As the echo answers and returns the voice, so should our will's complying, answer God's will commanding. This you may observe in David, a man after God's own heart. The Lord says, “Seek ye my face;” David's heart echoes back, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek;” so Psalm cxix. 4, 5. the Lord “commands to keep his

precepts diligently ;" David's echo is, " O that my ways were directed, that I might keep thy statutes !" We must see to our hearts in prayer, that they be sincere in hating what the Lord abhors, and in choosing what he offers in the gospel, and also promises to bestow.

4. In prayer we are to watch over our consciences, that they perform their offices faithfully.—'Their office is to observe and condemn every miscarriage, to urge unto a more spiritual manner of praying, and to be restless and unquiet, if prayer be omitted upon any slight pretence, or "the male in the flock be not offered to the Lord, but a corrupt thing." A tender conscience is a blessing that can never be sufficiently valued ; this will cause the best to be given unto God ; this will not be satisfied till God approves and commands ; and what a heaven follows upon prayer, when the Lord himself and his officer, conscience, are both pleased ! But if we grow unwatchful over our consciences, and suffer them to fall asleep, and become seared, a thousand faults in prayer will be winked at, nay, we shall be but little reproached for the total omission of it.

5. In prayer we are to watch over our affections.—The more of affection in prayer, the more pleasing the duty will be to God, and the more pleasant to him that performs it. There is enough in the Lord to draw forth the very strength of our affections. How great is his goodness! how able and powerful in his hand to save! how unsearchable are the riches of his grace! "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, what he has prepared for those that wait upon him," Isa. lxiv. 4. We are inexcusable if all this move not our affections. We should watch and observe when our affections do but begin to incline towards former lovers, and then compare those lovers and the Lord together, that other things may be contemned, and our souls may even break for longing after God.

6. In prayer we are to watch over our outward man.—Our tongues and senses must be looked to; Our tongues must speak reverently, considering God is in heaven and we upon earth, Eccles. v. 2; and we must have warrant from God's own word for the words we utter before him. Our senses must be guarded, else

at the ear, or eye, especially something or other may enter that may disturb prayer, and hinder it from being so fervent and effectual.

You see what we must watch over.

In the *third* place, I am to show what we must watch for in prayer.

1. We must watch for fit seasons to pray.—There are some times and seasons in which God is nearer than at others, and more ready to be found of them that seek him; thus the prophet intimates, “seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call ye upon him, while he is near.” These seasons of grace and love are carefully to be observed and improved to the uttermost. When the Lord came so near to Jacob as to suffer him to take hold of him, that was a special season; and Jacob was sensible of it, and wrestled long, and with an holy vigor; he kept his hold, and would not let go till he had got the blessing, Gen. xxxii. 29. That also was a special opportunity, when the “Lord spake unto Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend,” Exodus xxxiii. 11. Moses improved this, and begged for the Lord’s presence with him, and with the people of Israel; and having

prevailed for this, he adds farther, " Lord, I beseech thee, show me thy glory," v. 18.

Hereupon the Lord made his goodness to pass before him, and proclaimed, " The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, abundant in goodness and in truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin."

2. We must watch for admonitions from conscience unto prayer.—When conscience says, 'Thou hast not yet prayed in secret;' then go and pour out thy heart before him that sees in secret. Thou hast not yet prayed in thy family; call all of thy household together, and join in begging that the Lord would have mercy upon all. Conscience is by no means to be disregarded, but its admonitions should be taken.

The authority which the Lord allows to conscience is great, and its office is of a large extent. Conscience is a witness, and a judge and a monitor. As a witness it takes notice of the evil which we do, of the good which we refuse to do, and likewise observes when we are careful of our duty. As a judge, it acquits or condemns, according as we have been either

good or faithful, or evil and slothful servants. As a monitor, it tells us beforehand of our duty, and as we would avoid its accusations and reproaches, we should not venture upon any sin which it cries out against, nor neglect prayer, or any other duty which it charges us to perform, as we will answer it before God.

3. We must watch for the motions of the Spirit unto prayer.—When the Holy Ghost moves to this duty, and his motions are heeded and obeyed, we are to conclude, that the same Spirit which moves to prayer, will assist in prayer. It is a wonderful privilege that the Spirit is sent unto the churches, and is speaking and striving for their good. Every one, "should have an ear to hear what the Spirit says," Rev. iii.

When the Spirit speaks concerning sin, 'this is not the way,' therefore avoid it: 'Oh do not this abominable thing which God hates;' we must by no means consent to evil. When the Spirit says concerning duty, "This is the way, walk in it," Isa. xxx. 31. we must by all means yield unto that which is good. If the Lord by his Spirit says, "Seek my face," with the greatest eagerness we should

reply, "Thy face, Lord, will we seek," and he will not then hide his face from us, nor put his servants away in anger.

The motions of the Spirit unto prayer are twofold—ordinary, extraordinary.

There are more *ordinary* motions unto prayer.—It is the mind and will of the Spirit, that our usual times for prayer of all sorts should be observed; and though deadness and indisposition be never so great, and our hearts draw back from the throne of grace, yet we must go thither. Experience teaches that where deadness at the beginning of prayer has seemed invincible, yet on a sudden it has been removed, and the duty has been carried on and concluded by more than ordinary enlargements. The Israelites were commanded to go forward, when they came to the Red Sea; they might have answered, What! would you have us march in the water, and be drowned? Well, but forward they go, and the water is dried up before them, Exod. xiv. So truly, many times, when about to pray, there is great listlessness and many discouragements; yet we must go forward, and engage in our duty, and the sea is

dried up before us ; these discouragements are removed.

There are more *extraordinary* motions of the Spirit unto prayer.—Upon some remarkable providence, either cross or kindness ; upon the hearing of some more than ordinary affecting truths ; upon some special manifestations by way of quickening and peace ; the Spirit may move unto more than ordinary plying of this work of prayer. And the iron is by all means to be struck while it is thus hot. An extraordinary motion of the Spirit raised David out of his bed at midnight : “ At midnight I will arise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments,” Psalm cxix. 62. So we read also, Acts xvi. 25. that at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them. Here let it be observed, that when the Spirit of God thus extraordinarily moves to pray, he sweetly and strongly inclines the heart to comply with his motion ; there is a quickening heat goes along with his persuasions to engage in this duty.

4. We must watch for all manner of encouragements in prayer.—And truly the Lord is not backward to give, if we

be heedful and forward to take encouragement. The Lord encourages to prayer various ways.

By making us sensible what a privilege access to the mercy-seat is.—He causes us to be satisfied and delighted in his presence ; and our hearts cry out, Oh how good is it for us to be here ! “ This is none other than the throne of grace, and this is indeed the gate of heaven. It is good for me to draw nigh unto God,” says holy David. Psalm lxxiii.

The Lord encourages to prayer, by melting of the heart for sin ; he thaws the ice by the beams of his love. Sense of unkindness, and unsuitable carriage towards the Father of mercies, causes plenty of godly sorrow, and the heart hereby is exceedingly alienated from its iniquity.

The Lord encourages to prayer by enlarging the desires after himself, making the soul enamoured of him, and altogether unsatisfied till it taste and see his goodness.

By intimations of audience.—The Lord said unto Daniel at the close of his prayer, “ O man, greatly beloved,” Dan. ix. 23. Christ answers the woman of Canaan, “ Great is thy faith ; be it unto thee

even as thou wilt," Matt. xv. 28. When God, after we have been earnest for pardon, for sanctification, for grace to honour and to please him, causes a peace and calmness in our spirits, and we have a hint, that our petitions are according to his will, and will be granted; here is great encouragement in prayer. Now such encouragements should be watched for, and laid hold on with the greatest thankfulness.

5. We must watch for the returns of prayer. The Psalmist had been praying, and he resolves he would hearken "what God the Lord would speak," that is, by way of answer, Psalm lxxxv. 8. In like manner the church, concluding that the Lord would at last hear, resolves to wait for him; "Therefore will I look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me," Micah vii. 7. If you watch not for returns of prayer, you do not consider what you do, or with whom you have to do in prayer. When you pray, you take the name of God into your mouths; and shall that be taken in vain? When you pray you engage in an ordinance of God, and shall that be used in vain? What! do ye im-

agine that God's hand is shortened, or his ears heavy, and his bowels straitened? Not looking after your prayer, dishonors him more than you are aware of. He speaks to you, and does for you in vain. And this is the ready course to provoke him to keep silence, and to shut his hand: You are therefore, with the prophet, to stand upon your watch-tower, and to observe what God says to you, Hab. ii. 1.

Here one grand case of conscience is to be proposed and resolved; How we shall know whether prayer be answered, Yea or No; and the blessings we have begged, given as a return to our requesting them?

I answer, that blessings are of two sorts—those that are peculiar to saints, those that are common to the ungodly.

1. There are blessings that are peculiar to the saints; such as the sense of God's love, strength against corruption, righteousness and true holiness, peace of conscience, power to run in the ways of God's commands without weariness, and to walk without fainting. If such blessings as these are prized, and earnestly desired in prayer, and after prayer are bestowed, they may be concluded "the

fruit of supplication." "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me," says David, "and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul," Psalm cxxviii. 3. He prayed for grace and spiritual strength, and had it, and concludes his prayer was answered. It is only the children of God who long and beg for such blessings; and if the Lord's hand be open, and gives the blessings begged, we may also conclude that his ear was open to the begging.

2. There are blessings that are common to the ungodly; as health, food, raiment, relations, prosperity, removing of afflictions; and mercies of the like nature. It is more difficult to know when these are given or continued as a return to prayer: but yet this may be known in these particulars—

1. Temporal blessings are the fruit of prayer, when they were begged not only of God, but for God, that they might be employed in his service and to his praise. Joshua begged for victory over the Canaanites, but he had an eye to God's great name, which he knew would be dishonored if Israel were overthrown. Josh. vii. 9. When we desire some estate that we may do good with it, and

honor the Lord with our substance; when we desire health and strength that we may be the more useful, and serve our generation according to the will of God, and what we desired is bestowed, surely prayer is heard.

2. Temporal blessings are the fruit of prayer, when they are begged with an humble and holy submission, and not asked as the principal things. When we pray for daily bread, and the meat that perishes, in such a measure as the Lord sees most meet to deal forth to us; but our greatest hunger and thirst is after higher things, even that meat which endures to everlasting life, and the waters of that fountain that is always flowing, and yet ever full.

3. Temporal blessings are obtained by prayer, when they prove as cords to draw the heart nearer to God, and effectually engage unto obedience. David was brought very low, the sorrows of death compassed him; he calls upon the name of the Lord for deliverance, (Psalm cxvi. 3, 4); well, deliverance is granted, and what effect had it? It makes him admire divine mercy, it strengthens his faith, it makes him cry out, "Truly I am

thy servant," and resolve to "walk before God in the land of the living." Surely this deliverance came by prayer ; and so himself was persuaded, (verse 1, 2.) " I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and supplication, because he hath inclined his ear to me ; therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

I have showed you what we are to watch for in prayer.

In the *fourth* place, I am to show what manner of watching is required.

1. Our watch must be very strict ; and this strictness will be acknowledged reasonable, if we consider that prayer is a business of weight. Life or death, blessing or cursing, will follow according as we speed well or ill in prayer. When we come to the throne of grace, we entreat for no less than the forgiveness of millions of offences ; the least of which, if unpardoned, is sufficient to expose us to eternal condemnation : we entreat for no less than grace and glory ; we deprecate no less than the anger of the Almighty, and everlasting torments. Surely we should be watchful and full of care by all means, to speed in a duty of such vast concernment.

2. Our watch must be continued—It must be before, and in, and after prayer, and all little enough.

We must watch *before* prayer, that every thing may be avoided and removed, that may hinder the heart from preparing to have to do with God: it is not easy to enter rightly upon this duty.

We must watch *in* prayer. Prayer is expressed in Scripture by the metaphor of wrestling. If the wrestler watch not, he prevails not, but is easily foiled. If we are not very vigilant all the while we are praying, God, whom we wrestle with, will withdraw, and we shall miss of the blessing; and Satan that wrestles against us, will presently overcome us.

We must watch *after* prayer. We must trace our hearts, and mark how they have behaved themselves; we must observe and bemoan our failings, and be thankful for assisting grace. We must be the same upon our legs that we were upon our knees, and live according to our prayers.

In the *fifth* place, follow the reasons why watching is so necessary in prayer.

1. God watches how this duty is per-

formed, and has denounced a curse on those that do the work of the Lord negligently. He narrowly observes where the thoughts are, and how much of the heart and affection is in every prayer. Hearken to the apostle, "neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things" (even tho thoughts and intents of the heart, whereof he hath spoken in the foregoing verse) "are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Heb. iv. 13.

2. Satan watches. In a time of war there is the stricter watch: now our life is a warfare, therefore we should be ever vigilant; "our adversary the devil goes about," (1 Peter v. 8.) endeavoring to do all the mischief, and to hinder all the good he possibly can. Satan is very busy about us in prayer, and if our unwatchfulness gives him but the least encouragement and advantage, he presently spies and takes it.

3. Unless we watch, our hearts will deal treacherously. They will start aside from God like deceitful bows, and the arrow of prayer will be far from hitting the mark; but our supplications will degenerate into mere formality; whereas,

If we are intent and serious, and do mind our business while we are at prayer, we shall undoubtedly make something of it. I come at last to the application.

Use first is, of Reproof. Two sorts of persons deserve, and highly need, as well as deserve, a reprehension.

1. The careless hypocrite is to be reproofed. The Scripture, which has this pre-eminence above all other laws, that it binds the very heart and conscience, does speak very terribly against hypocrisy, which is the heart's dissimulation and going away from God, even when the external part of devotion is yielded to him. The folly of the praying hypocrite will appear in these things.—

His conscience is fast asleep in prayer, and lets him do even what he pleases; but this sleeping lion will at length awake; at farthest, hell will awaken his conscience, and then it will bitterly reproach him, and never cease reproaching.

The hypocrite regards not the God he is praying to. He is not awed by the Lord's majesty, nor affected with his mercy; neither is he afraid of provoking

him to jealousy, but presumes upon God, as if he were altogether such an one as himself; "these things hast thou done, and I kept silence; and thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver," Psalm l. 21, 22.

The hypocrite regards not the things he is praying for, nor himself that is concerned in prayer. He is not concerned for his soul, which is most truly himself; and though he prays for the favor of God, for the kingdom of God, and deliverance from everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; yet he is so cold and heedless, as if he were indifferent whether heaven or hell were his eternal abode.

2. The drowsy and declining saints are also to be reprov'd. These having been once so thoroughly awakened, are more without apology, if they grow again unwatchful.

The prayers of unwatchful saints have very bad mixtures. Oh the forgetful-

ness, and fearlessness, and weariness, and mocking of the Lord, that believers under their declinings are to be charged with! How near do they come to the borders of unregendacy! how like are they to the unsound-hearted.

The prayers of unwatchful saints are very unprofitable. Children they are, but alas! they improve not their relation, nor make serious application to their Father. The Spirit is in them, but they accept not of his strength and grace. Prayer is not totally laid aside, but little comes of it, because they do not vigorously engage in it.

The prayers of unwatchful saints are uncomfortable. The Spirit is grieved by their carelessness, and how can it be expected he should be a comforter to them? Conscience is dissatisfied, and is continually grudging, because they do not stir up themselves to lay hold on God, when they call upon him, Isa. lxiv. 7. Much fear, much bondage, many secret gripes of spirit follow upon careless praying.

The prayers of unwatchful saints are so offensive, that they may justly fear some stroke from God, some smarting rod.

to awaken the spirit of prayer in them. "I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear and go away : I will take away, and none shall rescue him," Hos. v. 14. Now what was the reason of this severity ? It follows, verse 15, "In their affliction they will seek me early." He thrust the spur into their side, and made them bleed, to make them mend their sluggish pace in duty ; he chastened them that he might hear louder cries, and have more serious prayers from them.

Use. 2. Shall be of Exhortation. Be persuaded to watch in prayer. Those that watch not at all, pray not at all in God's account : those that watch most, make most of prayer. These arguments I shall further use to second this exhortation.

1. The more watchful you are in prayer, the better you will understand the devil's enmity. You will perceive his envy and his hatred, and how loath he is that you should receive any distinguishing mercies, especially at the hand of God ; therefore he does so bestir himself, that he may resist you. And the better

you know this enemy, the better armed you will be.

2. The more watchful you are in prayer, the more will you be acquainted with yourselves, and with your own hearts. You will more fully understand your wants, and your spiritual plagues; and the understanding of these is one good step to the supply and cure.

3. The more watchful you are in prayer, the more experimentally will you understand the loving-kindness of the Lord: you will find that he deals bountifully. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee," Psalm cxvi. 7. God is certainly willing to give. They that watch in prayer, take notice what they receive; and great joy it is to behold the prayers which, as messengers we dispatched to heaven, return loaded with mercy. "Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." So much then, for the fourth doctrine.

PERSEVERE IN PRAYER.

We must persevere if we would speed in prayer ; or, prayer must be with all perseverance. The words of the text are not without emphasis ; not only perseverance, but *all* perseverance is required by the apostle. There should not be the least fainting, but a vigorous persisting in our supplications. Observe how the apostle speaks in other places ; Col. iv. 2. "Continue in prayer ;" and, Rom. xii. 12. "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer."

In speaking to this doctrine, I shall first tell you what it is to persevere in prayer, 2dly, What kind of perseverance is required. 3dly, Give you the reasons of this perseverance. Lastly make application.

In the *first* place, What it is to persevere in prayer.

1. This perseverance in prayer, implies, resolvedness of spirit against all opposition. The resolution is not to be made in our own strength, but in the power of grace, and then it will be firm, and hold.

He that perseveres in prayer, resists Satan's endeavors to hinder him in his duty. Though this lion roar upon him by fearful blasphemous thoughts; though this adversary buffet him by confused, amazing, and affrighting imaginations; yet all his skill does not beat him off from prayer; the more busy he finds Satan, the more need he perceives of calling upon God. And as the devil cannot prevail by his more irksome temptation, so as to cause an omission of prayer; in like manner, on the other side, the more pleasing temptations are withstood. When he speaks big words concerning sports and pastimes and pleasures of sense; when he talks at an high rate of worldly advantages, that are to be pursued, that he may divert and draw away the heart from prayer; yet he that perseveres in this duty, believes this lying and deceitful spirit in nothing.

Nay, he retorts upon him, and answers, that therefore he prays, that he may find true joy, and greater sweetness in God than the creatures can possibly yield; that therefore he prays, because he has a mind to be rich indeed, and to have a

treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves cannot break through, nor steal.

And as for that opposition he meets with from within, from the corruption of his heart, which is indeed the greatest; he bewails it, struggles with it, and cries out for the Spirit of life to quicken and help him. He is convinced of the necessity of prayer, and the excellency of what is prayed for; and opposition is but a whet to him, that he may stir up himself to lay hold on God.

2. This perseverance in prayer implies, getting through all discouragements. The more that blind Bartimeus was discouraged by the people, "he cried the louder, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me;" and his cry was heard; according to his desire, he had his sight restored.

The woman of Canaan who came to Christ that her daughter might be delivered of a devil, met with great discouragements, but overcame them all, Matt. xv. 22—28. When first she uttered her request, "Christ answered her not a word." This one would have thought, might have struck her dumb, and made

her conclude it vain to have spoken any more. But, no ; still she cried after him ; whereupon the disciples intercede for her. Christ answers, he " was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Here was a second repulse ; but neither did this discourage. She comes and worships him, and says, " Lord, help me ! " Christ says, " It is not meet to cast the children's bread unto the dogs." This was a third repulse, and worst of all ; and yet she gives not over, but pleads, that though she were indeed no better than a dog, yet crumbs might be given her. And now she succeeds ; and whatever she had a mind to was granted.

He that perseveres in prayer will not be discouraged. Is his guilt great ? he replies, that the Lord's mercy will be the more magnified, if he obtain a pardon. Is he much distempered ? he replies, the more will the skill of the great Physician be shown in healing his spiritual diseases. Is he very unworthy ? he replies, that the prodigal upon his returning, found his father's doors, and his father's arms open, though he came home in rags ; having before wasted all his substance

among the harlots, and in riotous living. Though he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; yet he says, that Christ has eye-salve to make him see, gold tried in the fire to make him rich, and white raiment to cover him, Rev. iii. 17, 18. It is a mercy-seat, it is a throne of grace he goes to; and therefore discouragements are not invincible.

3. This perseverance in prayer implies continual importunity. Importunity is many times troublesome to man, but God is delighted with it. Humility, indeed, becomes us in our addresses to him, but yet we are allowed to be urgent, to be instant, to be pressing in those things which are according to the will of the Lord, and he loves to see us so; for it argues we value highly what we beg with importunity. The unjust judge was prevailed with by the widow's importunity, and will the Lord neglect importunate prayer, who has commanded and encouraged importunity, and who is so righteous and gracious? He that perseveres in prayer follows the Lord with his request; he will not let him alone till he has a pardon, and that pardon sealed: He will not let him alone till his lusts, which are the

worst of spiritual enemies, are killed; till more grace is granted, of which he cannot have too great a measure. Take notice of David's importunity Psalm cxix. 145—147. "I cried with my whole heart, hear me, O Lord, I will keep thy statutes. I cried unto thee, save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies; I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried, I hoped in thy word; mine eyes prevent the night watches," &c. He cried, and cried, and cried again, before the dawning of the morning, and in the night watches. Behold how urgent he was in prayer.

4. This perseverance in prayer implies an holy unsatiableness after God; and desiring still more though never so much be obtained. Indeed, there is a great obligation upon us to be thankful for the least measures of grace; but we are not to be contented with the greatest, but still longing for more. Though David enjoyed so much of God, and had such a sense of his loving-kindness, which was better than life, and experienced that communion with the Lord, which was more satisfying than marrow and fatness; yet we find him still following hard after God. "My soul followeth hard after thee, thy right hand

upholdeth me," Psalm lxiii. 8. And indeed the more we taste and see how gracious the Lord is, it cannot but increase our longing, and raise our thirst to a greater vehemency. The apostle Paul, though he had attained to so much, yet he says "I forget those things that are behind ; and reach forth unto those things that are before, and press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God." Phil. iii. 13, 14.

5. This perseverance in prayer implies, a continuing to engage in all kinds of prayer. There should be a constant and daily course of prayer, even unto the end of life ; and if at any time by weakness or otherwise, the course be necessarily interrupted, our hearts, at least, should then be working towards God, being sensible that he is our all, that all our hope is in him, and that all our help is from him. It is a happy thing so to habituate and accustom ourselves to prayer, as to make it become natural to us, and to esteem it necessary as our very breath.

In the *second* place, I am to tell you what kind of perseverance is required.

1. In this perseverance there should be no interruptions. Daniel, rather than his course of praying before his God and giving thanks should be interrupted, chose to adventure the loss of dignity, of his prince's favor, and his own life besides. And that God whom he served continually did deliver him. Daniel resolves to open his mouth in prayer ; God sends his angel, and stops the mouths of the lions, that they did not hurt him. And as carnal fear should not cause the omission of prayer, so neither should any prevailing corruption and deadness. Still the Lord is to be sought unto, and served.

2. In this perseverance there should be a continual endeavor to excel, and do better ; to pray with more and more spirituality and liveliness. It is a sad sight to see children as weak now, as they were several years ago. We conclude that there is some bad humor that oppresses nature, and causes that weakness, and is an impediment to their growth. It is thus, and more sad to see Christians stand at a stay, and perform duties no better now than some years ago they used to perform them. If there be still the

same deadness, the same unbelief, the same worldly-mindedness and distractions which were wont to be, it argues, the spirit is kept under by the the flesh and its prevalency. We are not only to do more than others, but to do more than ourselves. The Lord requires us, and truly gives ample encouragement to be not only stedfast and unmovable, but also "to abound in the work of the Lord." "The path of the just should be like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" Prov. iv. 18. All our duties are motions homeward, and heaven is our home. And the nearer home, the swifter should our spiritual motions be.

In the *third* place, follow the reasons why prayer should be with perseverance.

1. Divine commands are very express, not only to perform the duty, but to continue in the duty. In the text, not only praying is enjoined, but praying always, and with all perseverance. And, 1 Thess. v. 17. "Pray without ceasing." God's word of command should cause us perpetually to stand in awe: we must not dare to cease doing that which he would have us without ceasing employed in.

2. The Lord perseveres in attending and encouraging ; therefore we should persevere in praying. His eye is continually upon his people. Eye, and ear, and heart, and hand are all open ; and if we open our mouths wide, we shall be filled. Psalm lxxxi. 10.

3. The Lord is as worthy to be sought unto still, as sought to at all ; therefore we should continue in seeking him.— Though our expectation from other things be never so high, yet upon trial we shall discover their emptiness and vanity ; but the more we know God, and the greater experience we have of him, the more we shall behold his fulness, and how good it is to draw near to him. Israel went astray after other lovers, but found her mistake, and resolves to turn to her first husband, for then it was best with her. Hos. ii. 7. God's service is such as no fault at all is really to be found therein ; and therefore to leave that service, is very unreasonable.

4. We are far from attaining all that is attainable by prayer. Clearer discoveries there may be of God—there may be much larger communications of grace—there may be more of peace and joy ;

therefore it concerns us to wait on the Lord still, and not to grow weary of our attending.

5. This present world is full of enemies and snares; therefore we should continually have recourse to the God of all grace, that grace may be proportioned to our work, and to our danger. The world is evil; and the evil one is very active to draw us to evil; and he has a strong and numerous party within our own souls even all the remainders of corruption. Surely unless we persevere in prayer, and thereby engage him for us, "who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy," Jude 24. we shall not persevere to the end and be saved. The applications follows.

Use 1.—Of Reproof, which belongs,

1. To them who pray in a time of distress and affliction; but after that is removed, and their slavish fear allayed, they quickly give over. Thus the children of Israel, "when God slew them, then they sought him; they returned and inquired early after God, they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer. But as soon as the Lord

ceased smiting, they ceased crying; they flattered with their tongues, and were unsteadfast in his covenant," Psalm lxxviii. 34—37. This is the way to have affliction quickly return again, and that with more of gall and wormwood; or to have spiritual judgments, which are a great deal worse, succeed temporal ones.

2. Reproof belongs to them that pray for a little while, while the conviction is fresh and strong; and the exhortation to this duty is still sounding in their ears. But by degrees the conviction wears off, and the exhortation is forgotten; and then, Oh, how do their hearts depart from God, and what a task, and tedious thing is prayer to them! But those foregoing convictions will very much aggravate their after omissions; these omissions having been given way to, especially at first, with much violence offered to their own consciences; and resisting the Holy Ghost, who strives to make them persevere in supplication.

3. Reproof belongs to apostates, that somehow made a great profession, and none more forward to pray than they; but who now have thrown off this and other ordinances of Christ, being carried

away either by a profane, or by an erroneous spirit.

Many are carried away by a profane spirit ; and having restrained prayer even restraining grace is taken from them. They run out to all excess of riot ; they are abominably vicious, intemperate, unclean, unrighteous ; they declare to all that seven unclean spirits are entered into them ; and that their last end is likely to prove worse than their beginning. They once indeed did know the holy commandment ; but are now turned from it ; and is happened to them according to the proverb, " The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire," 2 Pet. ii. 21, 22.

Many are carried away from prayer by an erroneous spirit. These not only break the Lord's commands, but persuade themselves they do well in it, and endeavor to draw others to the like transgression ; and hereby their guilt and danger is the greater. Every one that speaks against prayer, or any other ordinance of Christ, as he strikes at Christ's authority, who is King of the church, so he is deceived, and made use of by the devil to

injure souls, by drawing them away from God and their duty. But it may be objected, that the apostle himself says, Col. ii. 20. "Why are ye subject to ordinances?" I answer, the 21st verse following, shows what ordinances the apostle speaks of, viz. the ceremonial ordinances; "Touch not, taste not, handle not." He is not to be understood concerning the ordinances of Christ's institution; for in this very epistle, he does command that the "Word of God should dwell richly in them;" and that they sing psalms with grace in their hearts to the Lord; and that they should continue in prayer.

4. Reproof belongs to them that limit God, and conclude, if they are not heard presently, that they shall never be answered; and so in effect say, Why should we seek the Lord any longer? Vile and sinful creatures should not be so quick with God. What though we tarry some time before we have the grace and comfort we beg; if it comes at last, is not the Lord gracious to a wonder? Besides, the Lord knows when it is fittest to answer prayer; therefore it becomes us patiently to wait, for his rightly timing

of his benefits is not the smallest part of them.

Use 2. Of Direction; how you may persevere in prayer.

1. Be exceeding jealous and afraid whenever you find deadness and formality seizing upon you. You know not whether it may grow. The prognostic signs of an approaching distemper easily persuade you to take preventing medicine. O when you find your hearts out of order, fear, and go to your physician to heal your hearts, and reduce them to the right praying frame.

2. Take heed of quenching the Spirit. Let your ears be open to hear what he says to the churches, Rev. ii Deliver up yourselves wholly unto the Spirit's conduct and guidance; be led to him, from what ways, and in what ways he pleases, else he will be grieved and withdraw; and if he does so, alas, your helper will be gone, and your infirmities will hinder your perseverance in prayer!

3. Be sensible that all your prayers will be lost, if now you should totally and finally give over. That righteousness will be reckoned as none at all; that is, *just like the morning cloud, and as the*

early dew that vanishes away. Pray on, therefore, that all may not be in vain.

4. Labor to be acquainted with the sweetness of prayer, that you may have experience of those quickenings, those enlargements, those supports, those ravishing delights that the saints have found sometimes in prayer, and then you will like the duty so well, that you will not easily be drawn off from it.

5. Depend upon him that gives power to the faint, and increases strength in them that have no might. He faints not, neither is he weary, and he alone can keep you from being weary in well-doing. As he only can help you when you cry, so he alone can help you to hold on in crying.

6. Cheer up yourselves with this consideration, that if you persevere in prayer but a little while longer, in heaven all your prayers will be fully answered. Remember, that if prayer lasts as long as time lasts, time will quickly be succeeded by eternity, and prayer will end in everlasting praises. So much then, for the fifth doctrine.

SUPPLICATION FOR ALL SAINTS.

The sixth and last doctrine is this—Our spirits must be so public, as to supplicate for all saints as well as for ourselves; therefore the apostle adds in the text, “and supplication for all saints.”

Here I shall first show what saints the apostle speaks of; and, secondly, why we should pray for them all; and then give you the uses.

First, What saints the apostle speaks of. The saints are of two sorts; triumphant in heaven—militant on earth.

1. Triumphant in heaven; and these do not need our prayers. We need not pray that they may be eased of their loads, for their burdens are removed, and they are entered into perfect rest. We need not pray that God would manifest himself to them, for they see him as he is, and not as here, in a glass darkly; nor that they may be freed from sorrow, and defended from enemies, for their joy is full, all tears are wiped away, and they are past all danger: “They are made pillars in the heavenly temple, and they shall go no more out,” Rev. iii. 12. In

all the Bible we find not one petition for departed saints. They are with the Lamb, crowned above, and are above our supplications.

2. Militant saints on earth; and of these the text speaks, and to these the words are to be confined; and truly all of them claim a share in our supplications.

1. We are to pray for saints of all nations. Prayer may reach them, though never so far; and the God we pray to is acquainted with every saint in particular throughout the universe; He knows what they all want, and how to supply all their needs.

2. We are to pray for saints of all persuasions, as long as they hold the head, and are dear to Christ, notwithstanding their difference from us in opinion. Sure'y, notwithstanding this difference, they should be upon our hearts to desire their good. On that there were less quarrelling and disputation, and more praying and supplication one for another! and this would be a great means to unite, and to heal our breaches.

3. We are to pray for saints of all conditions, high and low, rich and poor, bond

and free, male and female. Every saint is a jewel, and a jewel is not to be contemned, though it lie upon a dunghill. The meanest saints are precious in the Lord's eyes, and we should have regard to them.

The reasons why our supplications should be for all saints are these :—

1. Because of their relation to God. They are all his children, and he has the love of a Father to them ; nay, he is a thousand times more full of affection than earthly parents can be. If God love them, we should, and show our love by our wishing their good ; especially considering how much the honor of God is concerned in them, and how much his name is glorified in their preservation.

2. Because of their relation to our Lord Jesus. Should not we pray for them, since Christ died for them ? He bought them with the price of his own blood, and they are all espoused to him ; nay, they are his members ; those for whom he ever lives to make intercession. Surely then we also should intercede in their behalf.

3. We should pray for all saints, because of our relation one to another. We are all begotten by the same seed, we are

all members one of another ; " so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another," Rom. xii. 5. We are all animated by the same Spirit, one of whose principal fruits is love ; and love should be expressed in prayer. Finally, we are all heirs to the same inheritance. Oh how importunate should we be, that we may all come safely thither !

4. We should pray for all saints, because all are engaged in the same war, and are wrestling with the same enemies. We should beg, therefore, that all may be kept from the evil of the world : that Satan may be trod under the feet of all ; that sin may be subdued in all ; and that all may at last be made more than conquerors.

5. All saints are carrying on the same design ; the glory of God, and the advancement of the kingdom and interest of Christ ; we should help one another by prayer, and this great end may be attained.

Use 1. Of consolation. Saints have more prayers going for them than they are aware of. Those that you never saw, nor shall see in this world, are concerned

for you, and are desiring that you may have that grace and strength which you need, considering the difficulty of your work, and your many adversaries. As every one should pray for all, so all are praying for every one ; and this is matter of great encouragement.

Use 2. Of reproof to those that are of a selfish spirit, who are all for themselves, but Zion they look not after. These have neither love to Christ nor to their own souls upon a right footing. If they loved the Head, they would be solicitous for the welfare of the body ; and if they truly desire the good of their own souls, they would have pity on the souls of others that are of equal value.

Use 3. Of exhortation. Be more frequent and fervent in praying for all the saints. This will be a great argument that you are indeed members of the body of Christ, when all your fellow-members are loved ; when you feel their sorrows, and are concerned for their welfare.

1. Pray for the saints' unity, that they may be knit together in love ; their beauty lies much in their agreement, and their strength in their being united. But if a house or kingdom be divided, division

has a tendency to destruction. Christ prayed that his disciples "might be one," as that which would serve very much to convince the world that God had sent him. For the divisions of saints is not the least cause of prevailing infidelity, and of men's questioning the very truth of Christianity.

2. Pray for the saints' purity, that the Church may be more and more cleansed, and conformed to the holy doctrine of the gospel, and like her holy Head the Lord Jesus.

3. Pray for the saints' prosperity, especially for those glorious and peaceable times after antichrist's ruin, and the calling home of the Jews, when the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ.

4. Pray for the saints' increase; and in thus doing you are kind unto the world. Beg that the prince of darkness may lose, and that Christ may gain more and more subjects every day, and that out of the quarry of mankind more may be taken to be made living stones in the Lord's temple.

5. Pray for the saint's support under all oppressions, for their perseverance to

the end; and that the Lord Jesus would hasten his second appearing, when all his church shall be triumphant, when devils and the reprobate world shall be confined to hell, and all the elect shall join together in shouting forth hallelujahs unto him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever.

Thus have I finished this argument of Prayer. What are now your resolutions? Shall there be prayerless families still, or any strangers unto secret duty, notwithstanding all that has been spoken? May pardon, and grace, and life, and salvation be all obtained for asking! and will you not do thus much? will you neither be earnest for others nor for your own selves? Shall none of the directions that have been given be followed? Shall all the arguments that have been used be unsuccessful?

O Thou that commandest and hearest prayer! O Thou that helpest thy people to pray! pour out the spirit of grace and supplication; that thy throne of grace may be surrounded with supplicants, that there may be a great flocking to the mercy-seat, and grace may be im-

parted abundantly to thy own glory,
through Jesus Christ the great High
Priest, who is passed into the heavens,
and is at thy right hand forever. Amen.

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